

Eulogy by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo respecting the passing on of Mrs Henrietta Mildred Mgobhozi (MaNkutha)

20 September 2013

Malunga omndeni ka Gogo Mgobhozi

Bazalwane abathandekayo

On behalf of our National Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi; our former Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize and on behalf of all the people of KwaZulu Natal, I am here today to say thank you to Gogo Mgobhozi for love she gave all of us.

Bazalwane, it does not often happen that we get an opportunity to thank and recognise the good deeds of a person whilst he or she is still alive.

With Gogo Mgobhozi it was different; thanks to the members of her family who allowed us to come to Esidumbini to retract her movements; make a documentary on her travels and also to agree to our quest for her to join us during this year Official Opening of the Legislature addressed by His Majesty the King.

We highly appreciate the fact that Gogo Mgobhozi got a grace from the Mighty Lord to continue living amongst us up to the age of 99. We presume that the Lord was recognising and rewarding her for her love of life that she demonstrated when she dedicated and devoted all her strength as a midwife for more than 50 years, serving the people of the rural areas of Esidumbini and Kwa Maphumulo.

As a country we have been truly blessed to have a committed nurse and a volunteer who committed herself to saving the lives of multitudes of babies in the days when there were no healthcare facilities in 'Bantu' areas.

Gogo Mgobhozi journey is both enlightening and inspiring. We now know that in her early years Gogo Mgobhozi made an effort and succeeded in getting herself trained as an Auxiliary Nurse for 2 years in Pretoria and also decided to further this qualification with a Midwifery course.

We also know that she then moved to this area of Esidumbini after she got married to Mr John "Jan boy" Mgobhozi from Esidumbini Mission who at that time was working with Dr John Langalibalele Dube in the first ever historic Black publication, *Ilanga laseNatal* newspaper.

In that area she soon realised difficulties that the communities faced due to the unavailability of health care facilities. She then unaided took a conscious decision to establish several mud structure clinics including the one where the current Esidumbini Clinic now stands; others would sometimes be destroyed by rain. She was later requested to start a clinic at Mthandeni in Maphumulo under the then chief Meseni Khuzwayo.

At Insuze she opened a clinic in another white man's shop called Mbhodlela. She is also known to have used the back room of the shop of her brother-in-law, Ezekiel Mgobhozi as a clinic. Her very own house was also opened up to sick where she had a room dedicated to assist anyone in need of medical attention.

Our coming here today is about truly saying thank you Mama Mgobhozi for being an all-rounder totally committed to the well-being and advancement of your community who you also encouraged to have basic education and taught them to be able to read the watch and basic arithmetic.

We are glad that there are people here still alive who vividly remember her traversing the hills and rivers of whole area of Kwa Maphumulo and Esidumbini even at odd hours delivering babies. Where there was a life to be born, Gogo Mgobhozi knew that she had to be there.

We are thankful that she concentrated more on helping women in labour and applied innovative means in carrying out this task; using her own equipment; linen and makeshift incubators made of chicken and bird feathers.

We are indeed mesmerised by her forward thinking especially in offering the all-important post natal care through which she taught new mothers how to breast feed; clean their babies and how to tend them when illness struck. This she would religiously adhere to for seven days after the baby is born.

Again I say thank you to this progressive family for affording all of us an opportunity to celebrate Gogo Mgobhozi's incredible life.

Rest in peace Ntombendala; thank you for all the love; nurturing and sacrifices you made as honourable nurse. In the comforting words of **Irish Blessing** to Gogo Mgobhozi and family we say:

'May the road rise to meet you. May the wind always be always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains soft upon

your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand''

May your beautiful soul rest in eternal peace.