



health

Department of
Health
FREE STATE PROVINCE

**SPEECH BY PREMIER HONOURABLE ES MAGASHULE DURING THE CELEBRATIONS OF
WORLD TB DAY: OPENING OF THE MULTI-DRUG RESISTANT TB UNIT AT THE KOPANO
COMPLEX, WELKOM;**

[SPEECH READ BY MEC FOR HEALTH, MS FEZI NGUBENTOMBI, ON BEHALF OF THE PREMIER]

25 March 2011

Programme Director
Honoured guests
Ladies and gentlemen

The annual World TB Day commemoration activities create an opportunity for us as leaders and community members from various sectors to be aware of challenges faced by our department in the control and management of tuberculosis.

The purpose of today's gathering as was mentioned earlier today is to open this Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) Unit here in Kopano Complex. This unit will be an addition to the already existing unit at Dr J S Moroka Hospital which was the only MDR-TB Unit in the province for years with a capacity to accommodate 70 patients.

The government has noted with concern the increase in number of multi drug resistant TB patients. This situation is a serious challenge to the leadership of this province, and in answering the call to increase health care to the people of this province, this new unit with 45 beds was built to accommodate more patients with MDR-TB. This achievement was made possible by the financial assistance from National treasury and some donor funding.

Programme Director, it is a clear indication that, despite TB being a curable disease, and TB treatment being available free of charge at all government's health facilities, there are still individuals who allow it to complicate to these monstrous multi drug and extremely drug resistant TB or more widely known as MDR and XDR-TB.

In 2009, 21 026 patients with tuberculosis were diagnosed. The Department of Health was able to cure 71,5 percent but 4,5 percent of this number defaulted the treatment. This is now an infectious pool which in the end will result in complicated forms of TB such as multi drug resistant (MDR) and extensively drug resistant TB (XDR). Two hundred and sixty (260) multi drug resistant TB patients and six patients who were extremely drug resistant were registered in 2010. Currently we have 429 patients on MDR-TB treatment.

We must all remember that people with active TB disease can be treated if they seek medical help. Even better, people co-infected with HIV can take preventative medicine so that they will not develop active TB disease. People with active TB disease and who are not on treatment, are most likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day. This includes family members, friends and co-workers.

Programme Director, ladies and gentlemen, the spread of TB and MDR-TB calls for attention on the need to practice proper infection control measures in our homes, places of work, classrooms at schools, churches as well as in the transport that we use daily to prevent the spread of TB infection and other airborne diseases.

Other achievements that we had in the TB Program to make service accessible to all community members are as follows:

- We appointed 34 health professionals who will give medication including daily injections to those patients who could not be admitted in the unit to continue taking treatment under professional supervision from their homes
- We have leased ten vehicles that will be used by these health professionals to reach patients and their contacts
- We will allocate beds for MDR-TB patients in all district hospitals throughout the province
- We intensified case-finding in the district with the heaviest burden of TB in 2009.

Programme Director, the majority of healthy people with a normal immune system may never develop active TB disease, unless they are heavily exposed to infectious people who have not been started on treatment. To avoid spreading the infection to other people, TB patients and their contacts should be educated on good hygiene such as covering the mouth when coughing, keeping windows open for proper ventilation especially in overcrowded places.

In terms of the core knowledge that people need to have to change their behaviour, all citizens of this province should:

- Have knowledge of tuberculosis (TB) symptoms
- Know how TB is transmitted
- Realise that TB is curable
- Know that the department offers TB treatment free of charge
- Have knowledge that a potential TB case should seek professional care.

This knowledge cannot simply be targeted at individuals alone. Households are the primary producers of health and make up the primary actors of the health system. This health system includes communities and health institutions, both in the public and private sector.

Programme Director, the annual commemoration of World TB Day highlights the approach that we need to pay attention to all other factors that impact on tuberculosis control and management. These include socio-economic factors such as both housing and work environments that easily allow for transmission of tuberculosis, malnutrition, age, gender-related factors and unhealthy coping strategies that then spur the progression to active disease. While all these factors are heavily influenced by socioeconomic inequalities that we, in the health sector alone cannot correct, we must not forget our role in ensuring safer spaces for people to live and work. These are equally important to long-term TB control strategy.

Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to join us on the move to kick TB out until there is a significant reduction in the number of TB cases in the province!!

Thank you.