

FREE STATE: HEALTH SECTOR TO BE REVITALISED WITH 10-POINT PLAN

17 February 2012

Health MEC Fezi Ngubentombi and her department kicked off the 2011-2012 financial year on a high note, promising to revitalise the health sector and inject new funds in the health sector that previously saw hospitals and clinics running out of essential drugs.

As a starting point, she promised to launch or relaunch forums that she saw as vital partners in the provision of health in the province, and more importantly, the Traditional Healers Forum and the district health councils of Lejweleputswa, Motheo and Thabo Mofutsanyana, as well as breathe new life into hospital boards and clinic committees of the same districts, among others.

“Primary health-care remains the key priority. The provision of quality healthcare for our people, especially the poor, will continue to be a high priority during the year,” she said, adding: “We will continue to pay special attention to care for children, women, tuberculosis (TB) sufferers and people with chronic diseases. Indeed, we are ready to intensify our war against the marauding quadruple burden of diseases in our province.”

Many of these promises have been achieved and would be outlined in her departmental budget speech she will deliver soon.

She expected to reiterate her government’s commitment to enhance the Negotiated Service Delivery Agreement of government’s vision of “A long and healthy life for all South Africans” and the four outputs, namely:

- Increasing life expectancy
- Reducing maternal and infant deaths
- Reduction of the burden of HIV, Aids, TB and other communicable diseases
- Strengthening health systems.

The last financial year saw her kitty been allocated R6, 8bn, which is expected to grow as health is one of the key priorities of government.

The MEC will also outline their successes in strengthening strategic leadership and social compact and her 10-point plan intended at improving the leadership of the department and strengthening community involvement.

It was her considered opinion that as a department it would not plan and decide for our communities without them being involved. “This is the reason why we deemed it fit as a department to engage with all government structures, namely: district health councils, provincial and district Aids councils, hospital boards and clinic committees, in our districts.”

For example, structures like the initiation schools committees were revived and consulted before the successful male medical circumcision programme kicked in.

In order to keep health institutions on their toes, the MEC also visited hospitals and clinics unannounced.

In her coming budget speech, Ngubentombi is expected to announce that since 2009 to date, a number of achievements have been realised, like the hosting of the all-important health summit as well as the implementation of national strategies that have enabled her department to make significant progress.

This was followed by the primary healthcare reengineering and child healthcare summits last year.

On decreasing the maternal and child mortality rate, she will tell the provincial legislature there has been a significant reduction of deaths of children, in the fewer than five mortality rate, compared with the 2009-2010 baseline.

She will also tell the house the immunisation campaign has yielded results, achieving coverage of 98.4% for polio in children fewer than five years. 101% coverage was achieved for measles in the age group six to 59 months, 88.1% for measles in the five to 15 years age group.

In combating HIV and Aids and decreasing the burden of disease from tuberculosis, the number of pregnant women eligible for anti-retroviral therapy was significantly increased and HIV and Aids prevention programmes of social behaviour change implemented.

Some 1.3 million Free Staters have been tested for HIV-Aids and TB and the number of patients initiated on the anti-retroviral programme now stands at 114082. During 2010-2011, a reduction was achieved with respect to HIV prevalence among 15- to 24-year-old pregnant women.

The department said it had invested heavily in human resource capacity, including the appointment of 200 emergency medical service personnel and filled 828 other posts.

[Source: www.thenewage.co.za]