



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Collaborations among stakeholders can help save more lives of mothers and children in Gauteng – MEC Ramokgopa**

Innovative partnerships between key role-players in the Gauteng Province could help prevent loss of life of mothers and children - making more families happier and reducing the overall the socio-economic impact of preventable maternal and child ill health and deaths.

Addressing more than 200 delegates at the two-day Gauteng Health Summit which began on Friday 04 May, Gauteng Health MEC, Dr Gwen Ramokgopa, said “a collaborative synergistic approach - beginning from us gathered here from across policy, professional, academic, civil society and stakeholder platforms can save more mothers and children” also improving the overall quality of life of all Gauteng residents.

The Summit, among others, aimed to bring key stakeholders under one roof in a quest to find better and sustained solutions for the improvement of health of mothers and children in the province; something which Dr Ramokgopa believes was achieved as the delegates at the gathering ranged from Maternal Health Practitioners, Health Systems Leaders, Clinical Specialists in Maternal and Child Health; the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), community representatives and advocacy groups on women and children. A committee comprising of Academicians from WITS and Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, Clinicians, Policy and Administrators across the Health System were dully acknowledged for their contributions in putting together the Health Summit in line with the commitment to strengthen partnership in health care delivery.

The 2018/19 consultative Maternal Health Summit was held under the theme: “Commitment to Quality Health Services: Accelerating Service Delivery Improvement for Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health.”

Amongst others, the delegates used their wide-ranging expertise to explore innovative strategies, plans and protocols that could be adopted to harmonise and optimise impact on Maternal and Child Health in the province.

Discussions at the Summit included key enablers to achieve impact, models to be adopted to improve accountability for Maternal and Child Health Programmes and Services and improving clinical governance and mitigating risks. Delegates also spoke about how best could collaborations with internal and external stakeholders help in accelerating access to quality of care for mothers and babies.

Whilst significant progress has been made over the past few years with the control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, central to this vision is the acknowledgement that Maternal and Child morbidity and mortality contribute to the huge burden of disease in our country and specifically in our province - referred to as the Quadruple Burden of Disease, said Dr Ramokgopa.

According to the latest Triennium Report on Maternal Deaths (2014-2016), 830 women died - 62 from private hospitals - in the Gauteng Province with an institutional maternal mortality ratio of 125/100 000. HIV-related deaths continue to decrease compared to the previous triennium. However, maternal deaths related to hypertensive disorders and obstetrics haemorrhage remain a challenge.

“Last year, we introduced limited ultrasound which enabled primary health care advanced midwives to identify problems early using ultrasound. We also have research which showed that this intervention has really assisted at the primary care level for early referral, which is a positive outcome for both mothers and children and expands the use of technology. Together, we can work better to promote safe motherhood and safe childhood. Having made great progress over the past few years, our collective effort must result in a greater impact towards achieving our common goals.

The Gauteng Health MEC added that she was “quite happy about the dedication and passion of the delegates”.

“There is an acknowledgment that we must also do things differently. My greater wish is that the Summit will spearhead an organisational shift that will foster a culture that values and uses evidence for meaningful decision-making,” she said.

The Summit has further enabled the Department to look at the health systems challenges, especially issues such as the shortage of staff.

Flowing from the Summit, MEC Ramokgopa made the following commitments:

- That issues of maternal and child health will be prioritised for the posts reserved for critical shortages;
- In this financial year, the maintenance budget for infrastructure as well peer reviews to strengthen clinical governance on a weekly or monthly basis where teams will be assessed how good they have been and what their challenges are;
- That the issues of patients’ files also receive prominence as it had been found that in many instances the courts of law rules against the Department because the records have been lost, stolen or not completed with professionalism while those who were handling the records were no longer with the Department.

“This is a key risk area in terms of medical litigations because they are preventable and there are also cases of non-preventable cerebral palsy; so it’s a matter of having proper records at all times,” stressed MEC Ramokgopa.

Dr Ramokgopa also took time to pay a special tribute to the midwives as the last day of the Summit coincided with the International Midwife Day.

“We are grateful for the contributions that midwives make to humankind. We are here to support you and commend you for the sterling work you do. We must ensure that there is a continued effort to remove any rogue element from your noble practice,” said the MEC.

Ramokgopa was adamant that the Summit will not become a talk shop, emphasising that the outputs the Summit must be translated into action plans with timeframes and responsibilities assigned to various role players so that by end of the first quarter of this current financial year officials could account on progress made.

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