

**SPEAKING NOTES OF THE MEC OF HEALTH IN
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, Ms SASEKANI MANZINI ON
THE OCCASION OF MEC's SERVICE EXCELLENCE
AWARDS, AT INGWENYAMA LODGE, MBOMBELA.**

11 December, 2019

Program Director,

Member(s) of the Portfolio Committee,

Executive Mayors,

Member(s) of the Mayoral Committee

Head of Department,

Councillors present here,

Top and Senior Management of the Department,

Organised Labour

Our partners and sponsors

Members of the Business Fraternity

The entire Health corps present here today

Invited guests from within the Health sector and beyond

Esteemed health workers,

Media houses,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sanibonani,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you here today to grace this Service Excellence Awards event. As the Greek philosopher Aristotle once said:

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit”.

These awards are significant in that they come at the time when our fledgling democracy is celebrating 25 years of freedom, peace and prosperity. They also occur amid revolutionary changes in the Health system occasioned by a plethora of progressive policies such as the National Health Insurance (NHI). At the core of this massive Bill is equitable access to quality healthcare irrespective of financial status. Our vision, is that the public health sector becomes the provider of choice for the delivery of quality health care services under the NHI.

We celebrate this day with a full view that our health care facilities are a platform upon which about eighty eight percent of the people in this Province, from villages to suburbs are served.

You will agree with me HOD that much as the majority of the people of this province rely on us, the Department is sometimes regarded as being inefficient with challenges such long waiting times, bad staff attitude, lack of or insufficient medicines and delayed response times of the ambulances.

These are realities that we have to progressively work towards improving, as a collective, so that our communities are served with the respect and dignity that they deserve. We definitely need to work together to ensure a long and healthy life for all our people in the province.

What excites me most is that inspite of the negative publicity, there are pockets of excellence and this is why today, we are appreciating,

recognizing and celebrating those individuals and facilities that are progressively moving in the right direction to improve the image of this Department and build public confidence in our delivery of health care services.

I am positive that this Department has great potential of reversing the expressed negative publicity if all of us can adopt the attitude expressed by Rick Pitino when he said “ ***Excellence is the unlimited ability to improve the quality of what you have to offer***”.

The Service Excellence awards are an off-spring of two important pieces of policies, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service and White Paper on Service Delivery. Key to these policies is the delivery of public services which meets the basic needs by putting people first. (Batho Pele).

According to the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, all service delivery sites, including health care facilities, are expected to comply in respect of the Batho Pele principles.

Our department is fully aware of the hindrances to service excellence such as shortage of staff, inadequate safety and security issues and aging infrastructure to name just a few.

As the Provincial Government under the astute leadership of the Honourable Premier Refilwe Mtshweni- Tsipane and of course in consultation with Organized Labour, we came up with a programme of action to address all hindrances particularly the security issues which are more urgent.

It is part of my vision that in this Department we vigorously promote teamwork where one hand knows what the other does. We need to work towards a cohesive system.

I want us to promote integration and consequently I want to be an MEC that is closer to employees at all levels so that I will not only understand your frustrations, but be part of the strategies that will realise practical and workable solutions to alleviate those frustrations.

Ladies and gentlemen, our Department is working very hard to establish a firm reputation and to be placed among our peers as a pioneering, bold and goal-getting department.

In many instances we have relied on the courage, initiatives, innovation and commitment of our staff and colleagues. Without taking an iota or a word from the awards and citations that will be given to individuals, I am sure you will agree with me that the wind beneath their wings have been their colleagues, supervisors, subordinates and families. I hope in each of the person that will receive an award today, these others that I have mentioned, will recognise their own contribution.

Therefore, the recipients' of today's awards must know that their excellence is conferring to the communities that they serve. The rationale for greater community participation is driven in part by our realization that those who receive the service are best placed in evaluating the service's value. Put differently, these awards are an investment in the pride, confidence and trust placed by the people of the Province in our Department.

Programme Directors

Let me reiterate that the broad objectives of these Service Excellence Awards are to identify and reward facilities/individuals that have demonstrated outstanding ability in the following:

- creating a platform to showcase areas of excellence.
- developing a culture of celebrating innovation and commitment
- Enabling employees to have a sense of belonging and recognition.
- instilling a culture of excellence in service delivery
- Contributing towards good staff morale and positive attitudes

Program Director, it is fitting that I give meaning to this occasion, the essential meaning to which the pomp, ceremony and symbols seen and heard here are but an accompaniment. For that purpose, I draw upon the German poet, philosopher and revolutionary, Bertolt Brecht, where he says in his poem:

“General, your tank is a powerful vehicle

It smashes down forests and crushes a hundred men

But it has one defect

It needs a driver.

General, your bomber is powerful

It flies faster than a storm and carries more than an elephant

But is has one defect

It needs a mechanic”

It is the unseen, unsung and unheard hard working healthcare workers, from porter to a Professor, workers of Mpumalanga Department of Health, who have put us in a position where we can today speak of a better life.

Program Director, there are two significant things that I have to say today to the personnel of our Department. The first one is to those who has just arrived as new employees in our Department. For them the words are:

“Thank you for choosing to come and work with us in the Mpumalanga Department of Health. You could have gone to glittering lights of the metropolitan cities but instead, you chose our humble rural selves. We thank you and we request you to treat our people with empathy, care, respect and to the best of your ability as you would want your family and friends to be treated if they were sick and vulnerable.

Our mission together is through a healthy Province to give meaning to freedom, democracy, dignity and human rights. You may not stay forever but when you do stay, it is my hope that you will have achieved the following things:

1. Taken the unit, facility or health services where you are working to a higher level of function.
2. Made a positive difference to the people who are meant to benefit from your services.
3. Developed yourself personally, professionally and academically.
4. Empowered your colleagues so that they are able to continue where you left off, maintaining or improving your standard."

The second thing that I have to say are to those employees who have been with us for some time now:

“Please don't retire or leave yet. We need your experience and skill. We may have younger, faster, stronger and even more qualified staff, but nothing can replace the values and experience that you have and you need to instil these values in the new comers.”

In conclusion let me echo the words of one of the famous thinkers, Abraham Lincoln when he once said: **“I do the very best I know how - the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing so until the end”**. I therefore ask each and every healthcare worker to do their best, the very best, and keep doing so till the end.

I thank you!