

**STATEMENT BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF
HEALTH**

The health delivery system has witnessed numerous changes since 1994. In the last few years we have been committed to continued legislation change and to the implementation of policies adopted since 1994. Much progress was made in this period but many challenges lie ahead.

The successes of the past years were maintained in the last year. Given that a comprehensive list cannot be provided I have chosen a few to illustrate the type of successes that we have achieved:

- improvements in immunisation coverage from 63% in 1998 to 74% in 2003) with no deaths from measles – a trend which started in 1999;
- improvements in surveillance especially of polio and neonatal tetanus – we have maintained our status with regard to the elimination of neonatal tetanus;
- strengthened IMCI strategy with at least 1 health worker trained per facility that offers health services to children;
- stabilisation of HIV prevalence in pregnant women under the age of 20 years;

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increase in the number of health facilities that offer VCT services to 2000 facilities);

- implementation of an electronic TB register which will improve TB control;
- continued low case fatality rates from cholera;
- significant collaboration with SADC countries in malaria control, including participation in the Rally Against Malaria in April 2003;
- successful introduction of food fortification to improve the nutrition of our citizens;
- appointment of a Pricing Committee to ensure access to affordable drugs;
- increase in the number of facilities in the hospital revitalisation Programme;
- Adoption of a policy to provide incentives to health workers with scarce skills and those working in rural areas;
- a range of successful public-private partnerships; and
- the passage by both houses of Parliament of the National Health Bill which once promulgated will replace the 1977 Health Act.

Whilst we have achieved successes a number of challenges remain. These have been highlighted by the Minister in her foreword and do not require repetition.

A key challenge is to support provinces in a more targeted manner and to improve the monitoring of policy implementation. These will be areas of particular focus in the next three years.

Dr Kamy Chetty

Acting Director-General:Health

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