

MINISTER'S FOREWORD



Foreword by the Minister of Health

During 2004, we celebrate 10 years of democracy and it is therefore a watershed year for all us. We have made significant gains in transforming the health system during the last 10 years but the work is not complete. The principles that we adopted 10 years ago especially those of equity, quality, affordability and community participation are as relevant today as they were when the first post-apartheid government took office.

We have published our achievements and challenges experienced over the past 10 years in a separate publication. We will not repeat these here but instead focus on the achievements of the past financial year only. Readers will therefore be presented with an overview of the national Department's achievements for 2003/04. Details of activities at provincial level will be covered extensively in the annual reports of provincial Departments of Health.

A significant proportion of the national Department's budget is allocated to provinces in the form of conditional grants. The national Department's budget is therefore small and is specifically utilised for its direct activities. As the custodian of the national health system, we develop national legislation, policies, as well as guidelines and protocols in line with norms and standards as agreed with provinces. Our work also involves providing technical support to provinces

and monitoring achievements of national targets. We collaborate with international organisations and agencies on an ongoing basis.



Within this mandate, the Department has produced a large number of policies, guidelines and pieces of legislation to facilitate the transformation of the health sector since 1994. What we need to do in the next period is to fast track implementation and more robust monitoring of progress of implementation. We also require more targeted technical support to provinces and health districts. I have signalled how we hope to achieve this in my budget speeches to the House of Assembly and the National Council of Provinces.

I wish to thank the former Director-General, Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba, for his leadership and management of the Department. As many would know, he was transferred to the Department of Foreign Affairs during 2003. The leadership of the Department was shared by the deputy directors general, who acted as head of Department for the remainder of the financial year. I wish to thank Dr Kamy Chetty and Ms Nthari Matsau for taking this responsibility and also wish to thank the officials in the national Department of Health for their sterling work during this period.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the previous Deputy Minister, Mr R Schoeman, and the MECs and their officials for their support during the 2003/04 financial year.

Finally, I wish to welcome the new Deputy Minister, Ms N Madlala-Routledge and the newly appointed MECs to the health family.

Together we shall make a difference!

Dr MTshabalala-Msimang, MP
Minister of Health

