



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

GOVERNMENT ACCELERATES DRIVE TOWARDS AIDS-FREE GENERATION

Durban, 18 July 2016 - Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, speaking at the start of the 21st International Aids Conference, taking place in Durban this week, announced the launch of South Africa's last mile for HIV Elimination of Mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT), which signifies a phase of accelerated efforts towards an Aids-free generation in the country.

The rate of mother-to-child transmission has been on a downward trend since 2008 when the government first launched its Accelerated Plan focused on preventing the transmission of HIV from mothers to their new-borns. This was highlighted by UNICEF Executive Director Dr Anthony Lake, also speaking at the Department of Health-hosted panel discussion, who commended South Africa for its success in reducing its infection rate from 8% in 2008 to 1.5% in 2015.

Despite this remarkable success, Minister Motsoaledi announced an even more ambitious goal of reaching zero percent mother-to-child transmission by 2030 and having an Aids-free generation of under 20s in the same period.

Explaining how his department would reach this target, Motsoaledi pointed out that 60% of people living with HIV in South Africa reside in 14 of the country's many districts. "By focusing our efforts in these identified areas, we are confident we will be able to achieve our goal of an Aids-free generation."

In addition to this, the Minister also mentioned MomConnect, a free mobile health application, messaging services and other platforms application, created to raise awareness among pregnant women about healthy pregnancy, which includes education on mother-to-child-transmission. "We already have approximately 800 000 registered users on the app, and aim to reach 1 million users by the end of this year," he said.

"South Africa's success is an excellent model for any country grappling with the HIV/Aids, particularly mother-to-child-transmission," said Dr Lake.

Motivating health care workers towards reaching this seemingly tough challenge, Minister Motsoaledi quoted the famous saying by former president and world icon Nelson Mandela and said: “It always seems impossible until it is done”.

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