

Dr. Kamwi

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technical oxygen, pharmaceutical and other medical supplies were dealt with to mention but a few.

It is further alleged that our tender processes are too long, slow and complicated. In this regard, I am calling for tender reforms to streamline and make tender awards transparent. All those concerned and entrusted to preside over this matter should give their full cooperation.

The Ministry is also faced with a challenge related to wear and tear. Realizing that the Ministry of Works and Transport is overwhelmed with sufficient capacity to maintain all Government infrastructures, Cabinet has long directed line Ministries to set up with their own maintenance units. However, we have not as yet responded to this call of duty. I urge the Permanent Secretary and management to produce an implementation for the establishment of a Maintenance Unit.

We also need to ensure that we have adequate succession coverage for all critical roles. Indications are that we have an ageing population in the management cadre. In the past, we used to retain specialists and professionals post the age of sixty years. This practice was meant to be a gap stopper for a while but cannot be continued indefinitely. As such, we need to engage in a deliberate exercise to prepare those who can take over from us. I therefore call upon the Permanent Secretary to spearhead this endeavor.

During 2010, Parliament passed a Bill which was signed by H.E. President Hifikepunye Pohamba on the 14th April 2010, and published in terms of the Namibian Constitution as Tobacco Products Control Act, No. 1 of 2010. However, this Act is not yet functional because the regulations are not yet in place. Non-smokers are still suffering from injurious side effects of tobacco. It is becoming a shame on us that we are unable to control this bad habit whilst having the law at our disposal. Thus, I urge members of Primary Health Care Directorate who are charged with this task to see to it that measures are put in place to empower the inspectors to do their work as outlined in the legislation.

5. Establishment of Private Wards in State Hospitals

It is my dream to establish private wards in key State hospitals to generate revenue for Government. This will assist our desire to improve the quality of health care services. During the commissioning of the private ward of Oshakati Intermediate Hospital during November 2010 H.E. President Pohamba following his impressions directed me to see to it that "All Intermediary State Hospitals should have private wards". I therefore re-direct that we carry this directive within the limits and constraints of available resources.

6. HIV and AIDS Manage-



Taapopi Sackaria and Pita Cephas Angala, Directors of Health for Khomas and Omaheke regions. Photo by Asser Niinda.

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While recognizing that Namibia has done remarkably well in her efforts to curtail the tides of HIV/AIDS, the disease continues to be a major challenge for this country. Late last year we released the results of the sentinel survey 2010. Unfortunately the prevalence rate at 18.8% is still high.

However, we remain committed in our resolve to bring the prevalence down. At the same time we will continue to provide treatment, care and support to those infected and affected. We must place greater emphasis on prevention and prevention as articulated in the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Framework.

Namibia has reached 90% coverage of children living with HIV receiving antiretroviral therapy, running head and shoulder with our neighbor Botswana. We are aiming at virtual elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV. Notwithstanding, we recognize the slow progress in reducing maternal and child mortality. However, I believe that the various critical activities being implemented will put us on the right path.

7. Supervisory Visits

Last year going into this year, I undertook a number of visits to health facilities around the country. During such visits, I observed that there were serious challenges that call for our immediate attention. One such challenge is related to late arrival at work especially nursing supervisors, nurses and cleaners. It is even more disappointing to see managers coming as late as an hour plus. I am therefore calling upon the directors and management to see to it that these late arrivals and poor work ethics are addressed.

One other important finding from the visits is that the referral system from the district and the intermediate level is not being used effectively. Some principal medical officers are delaying referring

cases that they cannot handle to intermediate hospitals. This naturally compromises speedy recovery of the patient. Accordingly, I direct the Chief Medical Officers to look into this practice and address it immediately.

I also observed that not all our medical practitioners including the private doctors are aware about the existence of the Special Fund despite the fact that the Permanent Secretary issued a circular to this effect. Thus, I urge all regional directors to see to it that information regarding this Fund is disseminated to all.

8. Partnerships

I would have not completed my job today, if I conclude this statement without making reference to two important points. The first one is the good support that we are enjoying from the private sector. The second is the public private partnerships that we have entered into with the private doctors, for the use of private wards in State hospitals.

The Ministry is indebted to the private sector for the contributions made to complement Government's efforts, including the renovation of hospitals, provision of linen and other materials, outreach service vehicles and ambulances. The list is too long for me to be able to mention all the valuable contributions here. At the risk of leaving out one or another private company, I would like to mention and single out Standard Bank Namibia, First National Bank of Namibia, NamPower, Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, De Beers Namibia, Namdeb, Namibia Brewery Limited, the Namibia Medical Clinics and Pukumani Trust for their immense contribution to the health sector in many different ways.

At the same time I would like to appreciate our existing partnership with private medical practitioners. Their services continue to complement Government efforts. However, like any partnership, there is need from time to time to review the partnership to ensure that it is mutually beneficial to both part-

ners. As earlier stated, Government intends to build and/or renovate private wards within State hospitals. I therefore encourage private medical practitioners to continue fostering stronger partnerships by utilising the private wards at state health facilities. However, I urge the Permanent Secretary to review the current tariffs applied to private patients to ensure that Government benefits from the use of its private wards.

9. The Role of the Media

At this juncture, permit me to commend the media for the im-

portant role they are playing not only to inform the Nation about challenges experienced by the public health sector but also in bringing to the attention of the Ministry some of the unpleasant occurrences.

I hasten to point out that there are equally good things happening in our health facilities. In this regard, while I acknowledge the fact the media acts as a watchdog and we thank you for having that microscopic eye on our health care system, I wish to appeal for objective reporting. Let us continue working together in a constructive and objective manner.

10. Summary and Conclusion

The theme for this meeting is "Fostering Change for Accelerated Delivery of Quality Health Services". In this regard, we are committed to overhaul key aspects of the Ministry to ensure that we deliver on the promises we have made. I have outlined major strategic objectives, priorities and initiatives that we will be focusing on. These are:

Restructuring of the Directorates to improve service delivery; Filling critical vacancies in order to alleviate work load on staff;

Reform and Streamline the Ministerial Tender Procedures;

Establishment of Maintenance Unit;

Ensure adequate succession coverage for critical roles;

Establishment of Private Wards to generate revenue for GRN;

Heightened efforts on HIV and AIDS management through Prevention Strategy;

Review and Strengthen Work Ethics and

Harnessing Synergies through the Power of Partnerships. Our main focus will therefore be on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2013 as well as monitoring and evaluating more systematic progress against the Plan. It cannot be or continue to be business as usual. There has to be a radical departure from the practices of the past of poor accountability and drifting performance.

The entire Ministry should embrace a culture of high performance individually and collectively. Whatever the Ministry will be able to achieve will be a result of the hard work and dedication of the staff of the Ministry, especially the Managers. A lot can be achieved if teamwork remains the clarion call. We will continue to count on the support of our valuable partners in the public and private sectors, to make our dreams a reality.



Cde Petrina Haingura, Deputy Minister of health and Social Services giving motherly love to a child at the Katutura Hospital.



Dr Richard Kamwi giving directives while his Deputy Petrina Haingula and nurses look on.