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**28<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

**Dear Health Care Worker,**

**Re: National HIV Counselling and Testing campaign**

On World AIDS Day 2009 government launched a revitalised campaign on HIV and AIDS and TB. The theme for World AIDS Day was focussed on taking responsibility: "I am Responsible... We are Responsible... South Africa is Taking Responsibility".

On the day the President also announced that South Africa is going to conduct the biggest HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) campaign the world has ever seen.

The new approach that the President announced, including changes to the HIV Treatment programme, will begin on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. The HCT campaign will continue the theme of taking responsibility. Preparations are at an advanced stage and the announcement of the official launch date and the call to action for all South Africans to mobilise to know their status will be made in due course.

The objectives of the campaign are:

- To mobilise people to know their status and link to treatment, care and support;
- Through key HIV prevention messages, encourage people to take proactive steps towards living a healthy lifestyle, irrespective of their HIV or TB status.

We are aiming to massively increase the number of HIV tests done in this period. All health facilities, public and private, will be offering HCT services and will be supported by our partners. All of this will have serious implications for yourselves working at the coalface of the national response to the epidemics of TB and HIV that are killing our people.

If we succeed in driving people to test, and I am confident that we will, then this will only increase the already strenuous workload that you have been carrying. But the scale of the epidemics that we are facing requires that we take unprecedented action.

I am writing to you personally today because for too long our response to HIV has been a burden shouldered alone by the country's health care workers. Though you have done so unsupported, it is a role that you have performed with great courage. You have managed to provide care and support to millions of people who enter our health facilities each year and during 2010 South Africa will reach one million patients enrolled onto ART. This is a great achievement, but it is still a long way short of the number of people who require life saving treatment. The HCT campaign is an attempt to reach those people who we have thus far failed to reach and to enrol onto treatment all who require it. If we are to succeed then I will need your help.

Though I would like for the HCT Campaign to be executed at an unprecedented scale I do not expect that you do this alone. I am engaging all of our partners to scale up their services and to work with us as we prepare to launch the campaign. These partners include all of South Africa's private hospital groups, our medical schemes and health care funders, any and all health care worker who is able to participate but who is not part of the current health care system, and all community support organisations. I have also engaged the national treasury and our international development partners to ensure that we have the resources we need for the campaign and the necessary post-test services.

In the public health care system I have also recently approved changes to the HIV Counselling and Testing guidelines that now require that all health care workers in the public sector routinely offer HCT to all persons who enter any health facility for any ailment. I have also instructed my department to move rapidly to enable community health workers to be able to test for HIV.

I want this national campaign to be one massive, unified effort against the epidemics of HIV and TB. As one of the soldiers on the frontline in this war I wanted to write to you personally to ask for your support as *South Africa joins you in taking responsibility for the HIV and AIDS and TB epidemics.*

Sincerely,



**Dr. P.A. Motsoaledi**  
**Minister of Health**