

News from Swaziland Nurses Association

First-ever Health Care Worker Wellness Centre Opens in Swaziland Minister of Health commits to supporting the Centre following pilot phase:

Geneva, Switzerland; Manzini, Swaziland; 28 September 2006 -. In an atmosphere of celebration and with firm commitments from all sectors, the Swaziland Wellness Centre for Health Care Workers and their families officially opened its doors in Manzini, the largest urban area in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The Centre, to be run by the Swaziland Nurses Association (SNA), aims to address the severe health worker crisis in Swaziland through attention to the health, wellbeing and capacity of the health work force. It will deliver health and other professional services to all Swazi health workers and their immediate families. The first of its kind, this initiative has been held up as a model of good practice by many global organizations, including the World Health Organization and Physicians for Human Rights.

The Centre is the fruit of an innovative partnership between the SNA, the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the Danish Nurses Organization, the Stephen Lewis Foundation and BD Corporation. “The Centre will tackle the many barriers to health and wellness services which health workers face, allowing for a strengthened health care workforce, better able to meet the enormous health challenges in Swaziland today”, declared ICN President Dr Hiroko Minami. “We are proud that nurses have taken on the challenge and are including all levels of health workers in this comprehensive initiative.”

“The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare on behalf of the Swaziland Government is pledging total support of this initiative in terms of adding human resources and sustainability, “declared Mr. N. Mabuza, Minister of Health and Social Welfare. “To care for carers is a Government responsibility and total obligation. It is clear here to acknowledge the major initiative taken by SNA in giving a hand to Government in order for her to meet her obligation.”

Housed in a brand-new, accredited clinic, the Centre will provide a holistic compliment of services, including stress management, a knowledge resource and training centre for continuous professional development, antenatal expertise, testing, counselling and treatment for HIV and TB, and occupational health and safety services such as post exposure prophylaxis and needlestick injury surveillance. “In offering quality, confidential health care services responsive to the needs of Swaziland’s health care workers and their families we will also address the severe health human resources crisis affecting Swaziland and much of sub-Saharan Africa”, stated Masitsela Mhlanga, President of the Swaziland Nurses Association. “These Centres and services must also be rolled out to the rest of the country and we are grateful for the pledge of support of the Ministry of Health in doing that.”

“One of the push factors for leaving the country and the health workforce is that

these workers are over-stressed and under-valued," said Grete Christensen, Vice President of the Danish Nurses Organization. "The Centre's services and the powerful message that health workers are valued and cared for will go a long way to keeping them healthy, in their jobs and in the country, addressing the serious health worker shortage in Swaziland".

Similar Centres are planned for Lesotho, Zambia and Malawi, working in partnership with ICN member national nurses associations in those countries and with support from the national nurses associations in Sweden and Norway, the Stephen Lewis Foundation and BD Corporation. It is anticipated that the Lesotho and Zambia Centres will be initiated in 2007 and the Malawi Centre in 2008.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of 129 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses since 1899, ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

The Swaziland Nurses Association is dedicated to ensuring competency in caring, improved professional and socio economic standards for nurses and excellence in nursing practice, management, research and education.

The Danish Nurses Organization (DNO) safeguards the interest of nurses and nursing in Denmark and focuses on health political issues, development and research in nursing, and cooperation with other organizations at national, Nordic and international level.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) helps to ease the pain of HIV/AIDS in Africa by funding community-level projects that provide care and support to women, grandmothers, orphans and people living with AIDS. Visit www.stephenlewisfoundation.org to learn more.

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ICN/PR/06 #15