



MEDIA RELEASE

New Start circumcises 100 000th client

Pietermaritzburg, 11 November 2014 – As a result of one innovative organisation, 100 000 South African men have reduced the risk of contracting HIV by 60%. It is estimated that five circumcisions result in one averted HIV infection, and thus far, the programme has averted 20 000 new HIV infections.

These 100 000 men are in a better position to preserve their health state and are reducing the chances of their female partners getting cervical cancer. These 100 000 men have been circumcised through New Start's medical male circumcision (MMC) programme.

New Start is a programme of Society for Family Health (SFH), one of the first NGOs in South Africa to provide medical circumcision services. Since commencing in 2010, the campaign has made a considerable impact in communities in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Free State.

The programme's Pietermaritzburg site alone has performed some 4 277 MMCs annually since the national initiative started. This site, which operates from a temporary unit, is responsible for 21 percent of the nationwide New Start achievement of 100 000 circumcisions.

It was also at this site where Xolani Zwane (38) from Noshezi Location in Pietermaritzburg, made the decision to get a medical circumcision – and so became New Start's 100 000th MMC client.

Mr Zwane had no knowledge of this service until he went to the Pietermaritzburg New Start MMC clinic for advice. Site manager, Susan Molutsoane told him about the procedure and all of its medical benefits.

"The final decision to get circumcised came from within me, there was no reason for me not to have do it and I feel great," Mr Zwane said two days after the circumcision.

The father of three is so pleased with the outcome of the procedure that he plans for his four-year-old son to get medically circumcised as soon as possible. New Start does not offer circumcision to children of that age, but will refer the child to an appropriate health facility.

This MMC programme has made great strides to provide people like Mr Zwane with a quality service and the clinical manager for the SFH MMC programme, Dr Lisa Mulenga, conveyed her delight at the organisation reaching the 100 000 mark, saying it was motivation for the programme to reach more communities.

“We have found that it is very important to approach traditional communities with a collaborative mind-set, advocating the importance of our medical circumcisions for STI prevention and personal hygiene. This enables us to reach many boys and men who wouldn't otherwise use our facilities because of various cultural reasons.”

Dr Mulenga attributes the programme's success in reaching people to the following: “Many MMC clients appreciate the fact that it is safe and free, and almost pain-free. And women are having a positive influence on their partners and sons.”

Clinical research has shown that medical circumcisions reduce the risk of acquiring HIV by 60%. Men who have had this procedure find it easier to maintain personal hygiene whilst protecting their female partners from a number of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Sex with men who are circumcised also has a protective effect for women as it reduces their risk of cervical cancer.

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Distributed on behalf of the Society for Family Health and its New Start programme by Meropa Communications

For more information contact:

Jo-Anne Collinge, e-mail joannec@meropa.co.za, cell 082 787 0202

Luyanda Majija, e-mail luyandam@meropa.co.za, cell 078 626 2296

Note to editors

The **New Start programme** was developed by **Society for Family Health (SFH)** in partnership with the government of South Africa and operates seven centres that focus on medical male circumcision. New Start MMC is funded by the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). SFH is a registered not for profit organisation and is an affiliate of Population Services International (PSI), a global social marketing organisation.