

MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

25 DECEMBER 2025

The Eastern Cape Department of Health has strengthened its partnership with social partners as part of a targeted, evidence-based response to the rising incidence of child and teenage pregnancy in the province, while intensifying support for vulnerable mothers and newborns, particularly during the festive season.

This intervention is informed by the Department's Report on Child and Teenage Pregnancy (April–July 2025), which reflects persistently high numbers of deliveries among adolescents aged 15–19 years, as well as continued births among children aged 10–14 years. The highest burden has been recorded in OR Tambo District, followed by Alfred Nzo District and Buffalo City Metro, areas characterised by deep socio-economic vulnerability, poverty and limited access to social protection services.

The Department recognises that while prevention remains a priority, many young girls and women are already mothers and require immediate, dignified support to protect both maternal and neonatal health outcomes.

Data-driven prioritisation of districts. Based on facility delivery data, the Department has prioritised OR Tambo, Alfred Nzo and Buffalo City Metro for targeted interventions. These districts consistently reflect higher rates of adolescent pregnancy and compounded vulnerability linked to poverty, gender-based violence, school drop-out and limited household support systems.

As part of its response, the Department continues to strengthen health promotion, youth-friendly services, access to contraception, school health programmes and collaboration with the Departments of Education and Social Development.

Partnerships with credible social partners complement these efforts to address immediate post-natal needs.

Partnership with Future4Baby

In this context, the Eastern Cape Department of Health has partnered with Future4Baby, a registered non-profit organisation that supports young, vulnerable and impoverished mothers and their babies, while addressing social inequality, sustainability, education and unemployment through a circular support model.

South Africa records approximately 1.2 million births annually, with an estimated 60 per cent of babies born into multi-dimensional poverty. Of these births, over 150,000 babies are born to child and teenage mothers. More concerning is the reality that more than 10000 babies are abandoned each year, while others are exposed to severe neglect or fatal domestic violence together with their mothers. These indicators reflect a growing social crisis that requires urgent, coordinated action. Future4Baby operates on the principles of Reduce, Recycle, Repair, Re-use and Re-envision, ensuring that quality baby essentials such as clothing, blankets, bottles and care items are redirected to mothers who would otherwise go without, while restoring dignity and supporting early childhood wellbeing.

Leadership of Future4Baby

Future4Baby was founded and is led by Ms Ingrid Louw, Founder and Chief Executive Officer.

The organisation was established following a deeply personal experience, when Ms Louw found herself with a car full of baby items intended for a granddaughter who tragically did not survive. In attempting to donate these items, she encountered a systemic gap — households had excess baby goods, yet there was no clear, accessible mechanism to ensure these essentials reached young, impoverished mothers in need.

Recognising this disconnect, Ms Louw created Future4Baby to bridge surplus and scarcity, transforming loss into a structured social intervention that supports vulnerable mothers and babies at scale. Under her leadership, Future4Baby has grown into a credible, organised non-profit entity with an ecosystem that combines social impact, environmental sustainability and community upliftment.

Christmas Day hospital visits and handover

Eastern Cape Health MEC Ms Ntandokazi Capa will lead Christmas Day hospital visits on 25 December, during which newborn support packs will be handed over at selected public hospitals in the priority districts of OR Tambo, Alfred Nzo and Buffalo City Metro.

The beneficiaries will be identified through hospital maternity units and social work services, prioritising child mothers, teenage mothers and women from indigent households. This approach ensures that assistance reaches those most at risk while maintaining accountability and clinical oversight.

Speaking ahead of the visits, MEC Capa said the initiative reflects the Department's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable.

“The increasing number of child and teenage pregnancies is a serious public health and social concern. While prevention remains central, we must also respond compassionately and decisively to those who are already mothers.

Through partnerships with organisations such as Future4Baby, we are ensuring that no mother or newborn is left unsupported.”

Commitment to integrated care

The Eastern Cape Department of Health reaffirmed its commitment to data-driven planning, ethical partnerships and integrated care, noting that maternal and neonatal outcomes are shaped not only by clinical services but also by social conditions.

By strengthening partnerships with trusted social organisations, the Department aims to improve immediate support for vulnerable mothers while continuing long-term prevention and empowerment strategies across the province.

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