SPEAKER NOTES

South African Health Review - Learning Health Systems

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SPEAKER 2 | **Dr Ntombi Sigwebela**
Welcome

01 Welcome and thanks

The NDoH (funders and hosts of the Knowledge Hub webinar), the guest editors – Lucy Gilson and Nonhlanhla Nxumalo, the 18 author teams, peer reviewers and guests/ stakeholders.

02 Why this theme?

- The South African health system is not short of data, experience or innovation. Where it falls short is in its ability to translate this information into effective, national application.
- The know-do gap is a recurring theme in the Review — policy that does not become practice, innovations that work in one district and nowhere else, lessons that do not survive the end of a project.

A system that cannot learn has to keep paying to rediscover what it already knows.

03 Why this is relevant now

REFORM As the system reorganises towards universal coverage and a stronger district health system, structures change but capability does not follow automatically. A new structure that cannot learn reproduces the old problems with new names.

FUNDING Health spending has risen on paper but fallen in real terms per person since 2019. In addition the system is still adjusting to the fact that donor funding that the system had come to rely on has been withdrawn. Learning is the one improvement strategy that mostly uses assets already paid for — the data already collected, the staff already employed, the meetings already in the diary.

RISK Climate shocks, cyberattacks, the aftershocks of COVID-19, and the needs of populations the system has not served well -none of these can be planned for in advance — what protects us is how fast we can learn.

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04 What this edition set out to do

What can we do with what we already know?

- This edition set out to explore successful health systems reform experiences within the country and draw from good practices and exemplary implementation across the provinces. Its initial objective was to identify practical ways to enhance specific aspects of the health system in the short term, while aligning with the broader reforms needed to achieve universal health coverage.
- What emerged was a snapshot of insights, innovations and interventions that highlight the overriding benefits of establishing a learning health system.

HANDOVER

I will now hand over to our esteemed guest editors Dr Nxumalo and Prof Gilson who will take us through the findings and recommendations of this edition.