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CoRMSA calls for Improved Non-discriminatory Maternity Health Care Services.

Johannesburg - 04 April 2022, the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) and its member organisations, strongly condemns the appalling neglectful treatment of pregnant women at Rahima Moosa hospital who are allegedly reported to be sleeping on cold hospital floors and chairs. CoRMSA has learned and notes with alarming concern the remarks that were made by MMC for Health and Social Development for blaming the undocumented migrant pregnant women for burdening the state health care system, as reported by different media platforms. The scapegoating of migrants fuels institutionalised discrimination and xenophobia amongst health care providers and users, and therefore needs substantiated and verified evidence when making such loose claims.

The growing continuous struggles of access to health care service in particular maternity care services extends to exorbitant maternity fees for pregnant migrant women. This excludes and discriminates women who are in need of maternal and antenatal services from accessing health care services which contradicts Section 9 (3) of the South African Constitution which states that "**The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth**". This section should be read with 27 of the Constitution on access to health care service for everyone.

Based on the above reports, it is evident that the hospital is struggling to address the health needs of patients accessing maternity health services not because of migrants overburdening the health care system but because of the government that is under resourcing the health care service. CoRMSA has in the past, tried to engage the hospital management on the same poor service delivery but our efforts were ignored by the hospital. In view of the above, CoRMSA calls the National Department of Health to honour its constitutional obligations and honour the health care rights of all pregnant women regardless of their documentation status and desist from using migrants as scapegoats for poor service delivery in state hospitals. We further urge the Department to work with civil society organisations and other stakeholders in resuscitating and improving the health care services for all and equal treatment to all women irrespective of one's nationality as migrants constitute both nationals and non-nationals.

CoRMSA further calls the Gauteng Province authorities to address corruption especially on the issue of resources that are intended to address the serious crisis in public health facilities including unmanageably high patient to health care worker ratios and lack of



capacity in hospitals. The same crisis extends to Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic hospital as previously reported by the media on the adverse impact that its continued closure is having on the quality of health services at Helen Joseph Hospital. CoRMSA also calls for the relevant authorities to act upon the Gauteng's 'new' R1.2bn Covid-19 ICU hospitals which still remains abandoned, unfinished or underused as previously reported from the media which might help to ease the current health care crisis.