



Keynote Address by the Sedibeng District Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr. Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the World Aids Day held at the Boipatong Stadium on the 01st December 2009, in Sedibeng

- The Programme Director;
- Emfuleni Local Municipality Executive Mayor: Cllr. Assistance Mshudulu;
- Members of Mayoral Committee and fellow Councillors present;
- The visionary Leadership and members of the host Organization;
- National, Provincial and Local Government Officials present;
- Pastors present;
- Donors;
- The people of Sedibeng;
- Representatives of various Media houses and personnel present.

Programme Director, it is indeed my pleasure to have been invited to speak and take part in this important and special World Aids Day event today – one which brings about hope in our struggle against HIV and AIDS.

Although a decade away from saving lives; the news about the breakthrough in the new vaccine – proudly our very own product, coupled with expected announcements of changes in our HIV and AIDS policies in the course of today by the State President, Comrade Jacob Zuma, is indeed an indication that victory is certain.

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the 16th Days of Activism Campaign on No Violence against Women and Children under the theme – Do Not Look Away, Act against Abuse. The campaign is endorsed by the United Nations and takes place annually from the 25th of November, and it runs up to the 10th of December which is an International Human Rights Day. Human Rights Day in March provides us with an opportunity to reclaim the right of women and children to walk the streets of South Africa without fear of being attacked.

Talking of the rights of our women and children – I have been so sickened by the Sun City Resort accident over the weekend; where women as old as 53 were made to strip naked and have their private parts inspected after having been accused of theft of R 40, 00, R4, 00 less than the women take home after their daily four hour shift. All these happened at the hands of white female security who have since been suspended pending disciplinary action. This barbaric action must be condemned by all of us, black and white South Africans.

This event today offers us also one of the many platforms that afford our people, both infected and affected in Sedibeng to come together to among others, look at the progress made and the plans going forward on HIV/AIDS matters in our country. Something that we do from time to time in our regular engagements with our communities

As I have said in my opening, it is important to note that we are meeting here today, few days after the launch of one of our government's most important campaigns. That is the launch of the 16 days of activism against women and children abuse. The campaign actually runs throughout the year but revived annually around this period, and I hope we will heed the call and assist in the achievement of its objectives.

Although I have been invited to speak about HIV/AIDS, I trust that the programme director will need not *sjambok me* if I try to address both

issues in my input. *Ke hore ka mantswhe amang, ke otl'a nonyana tse pedi ka lejwe le le leng.*

While there are many ways to actively support this campaign, I urge you all gathered here today to pass the message to our people that they are as well, urged to:

- wear the white & red ribbons today and during the 16-days period to symbolise that we will never commit or condone violence against women and children;
- volunteer in support of NGOs and community groups that support abused women and children;
- volunteer your time to help plant a garden at a shelter or join an organisation as a counsellor;
- encourage silent women victims to challenge abuse and ensure that they get help, and
- join your local Community Policing Forum (CPF) to help bring effective crime prevention in our communities.

The Sedibeng District Municipality, its local municipalities and all agencies in the fight against HIV/AIDS will continue to assist our broader communities by going into people's homes to see how families struggle with the triple burden of poverty, disease and stigma and devise means of assisting them.

We need to mobilise all South Africans to take responsibility for their health and well-being and that of their partners, their families and their communities. All South Africans must know that they are at risk and must take informed decisions to reduce their vulnerability to infection, or, if infected, to slow the advance of the disease.

It must be our concerted effort and goal of working together to build a society and the Sedibeng District Municipality that is free for women and children to live in. In this beautiful Region, there must never be an area, town, township or village where women and children live in fear and helplessness because there is no support for them.

The success of the Campaigns against HIV / AIDS relies heavily on those infected and affected. They must first accept that they are infected and be accepted by their immediate relatives and family members for them to feel accepted by the outside world. In this way, the stigma will not find its way through their minds. This will help them to lead a life living with HIV / AIDS without anybody scorning them. Something that we collectively ensure that it does not happen to the infected and affected people

We must be one in the fight against HIV / AIDS and the fight against women & children abuse. We must not be found wanting in this regard. We are all affected.

We must expose the perpetrators of the women and children abuse. I call upon all those infected to stand up for their rights. I believe that they know

their rights. By the way, they are human beings like all of us. They have basic human rights as dictated by our Constitution. I urge women and children to be brave and bold and stand up for their rights. It is sad that in some instances we keep quiet because we are afraid we will lose the financial support of our abusive parents, family members, husbands and partners.

Let there be no mistake, abuse is abuse and it can never be right and neither can it be justified!

Our fathers, husbands and brothers must respect women and children if they do not want to face the full might of the law. The simple fact is that abusers do not belong in our homes and communities, they belong in jail. As a society, we must work hard to promote a positive moral fiber that values the elderly, the infected, the disabled and those who are vulnerable. It is our role and responsibility to create safe and peaceful environments in our communities.

We must all say in one voice, enough is enough! All of us have to be whistle-blowers against those who abuse our infected, women and children and thereby rob us of our future.

Furthermore, this Campaigns highlight our responsibilities towards people living with HIV / AIDS, highlight the abuse of women in rural areas and in farming communities who some of them are still subjected to illegal working conditions.

I am pleased to once again report that the Department of Labour (DoL) is attending to these matters, ensuring that all employers comply with the legislation of ensuring that farm workers, like all other employees, are entitled to a minimum wage, proper working hours and are entitled to leave days.

I want to thank all the stakeholders who have partnered with government to ensure that this Campaigns run throughout the year as part of the 365 Days Programme and National Action Plan.

Most importantly, we must thank those responsible men and boys in our families and communities who do not spread the virus, continue to respect and protect women and children. As you know, real men do not abuse their wives and children! Real men *Don't Look Away (but) Act Against Abuse*.

We acknowledge that there are many men who condomise when engaging in sexual relationship with people who are not their full time partners, serve as positive role-models to their boy-children. Their exemplary conduct will help our boy-children to become real men in future.

As I am about to conclude let me share with you some shocking stats that really need us to think twice when we are about to engage in an unprotected and unsafe sex. Recent statistics from the Department of Health, Human Sciences Research Council, Medical Research Council,

Statistics SA and other sources paint a disturbing picture of the health of our nation. They show that nearly 6 out of 10 deaths in our country in 2006 were deaths of people younger than 50 years.

If we consider mortality trends over the last decade, we see that the age at which people die has been changing dramatically. More and more people are dying young, threatening even to outnumber in proportional terms those who die in old age.

This means that South Africans are dying at an increasing rate. The number of deaths registered in 2008 jumped to 756,000, up from 573,000 the year before. At this rate, there is a real danger that the number of deaths will soon overtake the number of births. The births registered during this period were one million two hundred and five thousand one hundred and eleven

To indicate the seriousness of these developments, the Independent Electoral Commission had to remove 396 336 deceased voters from the Voters Roll during September last year and August this year. What is even more disturbing is the number of young women who are dying in the prime of their life, in their child-bearing years.

In 2006, life expectancy at birth for South African men was estimated to be 51 years. By contrast, life expectancy in Algeria was 70 years and 60 years in Senegal. These are some of the chilling statistics that

demonstrate the devastating impact that HIV and AIDS is having on our nation. Not even the youngest are spared.

In 2008, some studies suggested that 57% of the deaths of children under the age of five during 2007 were as a result of HIV. This situation is aggravated by the high tuberculosis prevalence. The co-infection rate between HIV and TB has now reached a staggering 73%. Statistics indicate that the numbers of citizens with TB number at 481 584. More shocking, out of the 33 million prevalence, South Africa is responsible for 5, 5 million of this.

Programme Director, I am pleased to report that, in 2007, the District developed and approved the District AIDS Strategy 2007-2011. This strategy resonates well with the four (4) pillars of the National Strategic Plan 2007-2011 and is underpinned by the ward-based implementation of HIV&AIDS programmes and projects with the aim of increasing the involvement and participation of households against HIV and AIDS; increasing the individual utilisation of VCT services.

Since the inception of this strategy, the District has made some notable strides in reducing the HIV-prevalence rates within our communities. According to the extension from the National HIV and Syphilis Antenatal Survey reports for the past three years, Sedibeng District's HIV-prevalence rates have (statistic significantly) been reduced from 35%

(2006), 32.8% (2007) and 31.8% (2008). This is an illustration of concerted efforts by all stakeholders in the region where to date:

- Thirty one (31) ward-coordinators have been appointed in the wards with monthly stipend. We hope to reach 100% of ward-coordinators in 2010/2011 financial year;
- There are five-day quarterly door-door campaigns, utilising 1400 volunteers and paying them stipends and have reached more than 60% of the households;
- The District AIDS Council has provided more than 1 200 orphaned and vulnerable children with food parcels and vegetable hampers;
- The utilisation of Voluntary Counselling and Testing services have increased by 30%, especially among the youth;
- The enrolment of people living with HIV to the Antiretroviral Therapy has increased by 50% since 2007;
- The numbers of teenage pregnancies and who terminate pregnancies facilities are reducing, while there is exponential increase in the utilisation of the family planning services;
- The ward-based approach to the implementation of HIV&AIDS programmes has assisted more than 5 000 indigent households with the burials of their loved ones;

- We have trained more than 200 community ambassadors on accredited HIV&AIDS Comprehensive and project management courses, offered by Pretoria University;
- The District has funded more than 40 NGOs/CBO to assist with further prevention, treatment, care and support programmes for the communities;
- The District has mobilised business and private sector participation in the mitigation of this scourge, where more than 85% of businesses have workplace policies and programmes;
- The district has roped in and trained the Traditional Health Practitioners, Faith-based organisation, people living with HIV, people with disabilities, the elderly and other civil society structures towards concerted and well coordinated projects.

Programme Director, let me conclude by once again thanking our Government, State Agencies, Local Municipalities, NGOs and Donors for their concerted efforts in the fight against HIV / AIDS. I believe and trust that working together will ensure that the work that is done by these agencies leads us to the successful end. This we must do by vigorously participating in their various programmes and campaigns that seek to instill AIDS awareness and education to our communities.

We must accept that we need to work harder, and with renewed focus, to implement the strategy that we have developed together. We need to do

more, and we need to do better, together. We need to move with urgency and purpose to confront this enormous challenge. If we are to stop the progress of this disease through our society, we will need to pursue extraordinary measures.

As parents, we must continue to spread the message against HIV / AIDS, keep on teaching our boy-children to respect their sisters, mothers and grandmothers. *Monna wa sebele ke monna ya sa tshwaetseng batho ba bang, ya sa hlokofatseng molekane wa hae.*

Most importantly, all South Africans need to know their HIV status, and be informed of the treatment options available to them. Though it poses a grave threat to the well-being of our nation, HIV and AIDS should be treated like any other disease. There should be no shame, no discrimination and no accusations. We must together break the stigma surrounding AIDS.

Let World Aids Day today mark the continuing massive mobilisation campaign that reaches all South Africans, and that encourage and drive them into action to safeguard their health and the health of the nation.

This we must do though a considerable undertaking, which is well within our means, and we should start now, today, to prepare ourselves for this renewed onslaught against this epidemic.

We must continue to encourage men to stand up to be counted in the fight against HIV and AIDS, against abuse of women and children, plus in fighting poverty and all other social ills. We can only build a stable and peaceful society if there is stability and progress in our homes, at school, in religious institutions and in other areas where we gather together

Let us join hands and work together in promoting and protecting the rights of women and children. Let us be an exemplary.

I thank you