

SPEECH NOTES FOR KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON HONOURABLE WILLIES MCHUNU DURING THE WORLD AIDS DAY, 1 DECEMBER 2009.

Protocol Observed

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for attending this important event organised by our Provincial Government as a strategy that seeks to eliminate the spread of HIV/AIDS through the involvement of our masses. The World Aids Day is important to us all as no sober-minded person will ever deny the fact that AIDS is humanity's most formidable enemy today.

One of our priorities as this Government is fighting poverty. We all know by now that poverty contributes a lot to AIDS related deaths. People cannot take treatment on empty stomach and therefore die of opportunistic diseases. It is on that score that when we declared war on poverty we came with a holistic approach that seeks to intervene for all socio-economic challenges.

Effectively, every year on this Day, the KwaZulu-Natal Government deploys its leadership to different parts of the province to encourage everyone to take personal and collective responsibility to stop new HIV infections, provide care and support to those living with HIV and to ensure access to treatment for all people in need.

Our HIV&AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections National Strategic Plan for South Africa, 2007-2011 has key objectives to:

- Halve new HIV infections by 2011; and
- Ensure that 80% of people living with HIV have access to treatment.

To achieve these goals we all need to work together.

According to the report prepared by Nathea Nicolay, Metropolitan October 2008, on Provincial HIV and AIDS statistics for South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal is experiencing the most severe HIV epidemic in the country. A total of 1,6 million (16% of the population) and nearly a third of all adults (28%) were estimated to be HIV positive in 2008.

This year's key messages for World Aids Day are: **"I am responsible"**, **"We are responsible"** and **"South Africa is taking responsibility"**. These messages seek to encourage individuals, communities, businesses and government to take collective efforts in the response to HIV and AIDS.

"I am responsible" calls on:

- Everyone to know their HIV status by testing regularly for HIV
- Young people to delay having sex for the first time.

- Young people to make informed choices to prevent unwanted pregnancies and HIV infection.
- Sexually active people to be faithful to their partners and to use condoms each time they have sex.
- Pregnant women to test for HIV early in their pregnancy and to use condoms each time they have sex.
- Those with TB to test for HIV and those with HIV to test for TB so that they can get the right treatment.

“We are responsible” calls on:

- Couples to talk about their relationships and how they can protect each other from HIV infection. Couples can protect themselves by remaining faithful to each other, testing for HIV together and always using condoms.
- Men, women, families and health care workers to support pregnant women so that they can make decisions to protect their children from HIV.
- Communities to provide care and support to those living with and affected by HIV, in particular orphans and vulnerable children.
- Communities to take action and speak out against violence against women.
- Communities to stop stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

“South Africa is taking responsibility” says:

Government and all sectors of society represented in the South African National AIDS Council are providing leadership to ensure that every South African can prevent HIV infections, know their HIV status, that pregnant women can access Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission services, that all those with TB can access TB drugs and that all HIV positive people can access Anti-RetroViral (ARV) treatment.

I have learnt that this area has not been part of any HIV and AIDS information sharing and people are mostly affected by this disease. Therefore, on behalf of the Provincial Government and people of KwaZulu-Natal, I take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders who have put their efforts to make this event possible in at Indaka Municipality.

Today we talk about the Flagship Programme that enjoys support from not only municipalities, but also Non-Governmental Organisations including People Living with HIV and People with Disabilities are 100% behind it. Religious leaders are supporting the Flagship Programme and Amakhosi have shown interest to know and understand the programme.

We realise that strategies that seek to eliminate the spread of HIV/AIDS through the involvement of the elite only fail to serve their mission if they do not involve masses. We will only succeed if we work in partnerships with the masses.

A training of the Master trainers was done and 38 officials were trained. These Master trainers are from different government departments and they themselves have trained 137 cadres identified from the most deprived wards. War Rooms are situated at each local municipality for immediate interventions but all data collected is discussed locally and sent to the Central (Uthukela) War Room which is situated at Uthukela Primary Health Centre (Ladysmith opposite the Royal Hotel) for capturing. Local war rooms are mainly schools.

Statistics tell us that between April and June 2009, 11 637 people underwent pre-test counselling, 11 394 tested and 4 103 tested positive. In terms of prevention, Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) is available to all public clinics and hospital (53 health facilities). About 181 195 male condoms more than 20 000 female condoms are distributed per month. Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) is available in the district in the four accredited hospitals (3 Government and 1 Private). 39 primary health care facilities are down referral institutions for ART.

About 151 095 social grants are paid to Uthukela ranging from old age, disability, war veterans, foster care, care dependency to grant in aid and child support grant. The total number of the population is 714 910, dominated by Africans at 95.4%, followed by Indians at 3.2%, Whites at 1% and coloureds at 0.3%.

It is our hope that as this Day coincides with the 16 Days of Activism Against Women and Children Abuse, the Flagship Programme will go a long way in also addressing such issues not only during the 16 days but 365 days per year.

Together we can do more to secure a better life for all. However, a better life will not just float in a foundation-less space. It is based on fundamentals and preconditions such as peace, democracy and development.

I thank you