

Remarks by MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure Mme. Nkakareng Rakgoale on behalf of Premier Chupu Stan Mathabatha, during the National Launch of Youth HIV Prevention Strategy held at Mdavula Village, Collins Chabane Municipality, Vhembe District.

30 June 2022

Programme Directors Dr. Phophy Ramathuba who is MEC for Health and Mme. Mary Jane Ramusi who is the Limpopo Youth Sector Leader
Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and People with disabilities; Mme. Maite Nkoana Mashabane
Health Deputy Minister; Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo
Sport, Arts and Culture Deputy Minister; Mme. Nocawe Mafu
Basic Education Deputy Minister; Reginah Mhaule
All MECs present here;
Vhembe District Municipality Executive Mayor Cllr. Dowelani Nenguda and other Executive Mayors
Collins Chabane Local Municipality Mayor Cllr. Moses Maluleke and your counterparts from other municipalities
All councilors present here;
Ndhavethitha Mdavula na huvo ya vona
All speakers who have already spoken on this important occasion
Members of the Media
Avuxeni!
Thobela!
Ndimatsheloni!
Good morning!

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be given an opportunity to speak during this launch of the National Youth HIV Prevention Strategy. I am doing so on behalf of the Premier of our province, Ntate Chupu Stanley Mathabatha. Ntate Mathabatha is today committed with other responsibilities that are equally important to this one.

We are today gathered here as the country is gravitating towards the end of June Youth Month Commemoration, which marks the infamous 1976 June 16. This is the day the country reflects on the massacre of school children during the SOWETO uprising. The democratically elected government uses this month to celebrate the resilience and radicalism that was displayed by the youth at that time, when they fought against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction by the Apartheid regime. In addition, we use the month to reflect on the positive strides that have been made by government in the development and empowerment of young people in our country.

I proudly stand here today and say that the democratic government has made education easily accessible to the academically deserving students. The doors of

learning have been opened for all, a full realization of the declaration of the 1955 freedom charter.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Government understands that the youth of today is facing challenges unique and different to those who were faced by their predecessors 46 years ago.

I must however indicate that our democratic government has made significant strides in intensifying the youth development work in all the spheres of government. However, we can't shy away from the painful truth that today, more and more young people are also confronted with the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Some of the challenges that the youth of today is faced with is substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, Gender Based Violence and bullying. Limpopo province is also joining the rest of the country in mourning the Enyobeni tavern tragedy in the Eastern Cape, where 21 children perished. What happened there might be a flashlight on the high level of substance abuse by majority of young people in different parts of the country. We are however waiting anxiously for the conclusion of police investigations to shed more light on what exactly transpired and for the law to subsequently take its cause.

Parents are urged to revisit their parenting roles and responsibilities to ensure that we groom our children in conducive environment.

In Limpopo, we are also mourning the death of a six-year-old initiate at an initiation school in the Modjadjie area in Mopani District. We commend the department of COGHSTA as led by MEC Tatana Basikopo Makamu, for having acted swiftly and shutdown the initiation school. May the souls of all these young people rest in peace.

Programme Director

As the Limpopo provincial government, we feel very honoured to be afforded an opportunity to host the launch of the National Youth HIV Prevention Strategy here in the Collins Chabane Local Municipality, in the Vhembe District. On the 1st of December last year, we were in the very same local municipal area to commemorate World AIDS Day, because of the high numbers of teenage pregnancy rate affecting children between the ages of 10 and 19. The provincial government is concerned at the high teenage pregnancy rate that has been recorded in the Vhembe, Capricorn and Mopani Districts.

It is concerning to learn that a total number of one-hundred and thirty-three thousand nine-hundred and seventy-one (133 971) births by teenage mothers were reported in the previous financial year in the province.

Vhembe District recorded the highest at thirty-one thousand nine hundred and seventy-seven (31 977), followed by Capricorn District with a total number of twenty-nine thousand five hundred and sixty-four (29 564) and Mopani recording twenty-nine thousand and fifty births by young mothers (29 050).

This is not only teenage pregnancy, as it is mostly referred to, but it has elements of statutory rape. In addition, these are not just statistics, but an element of exposure for young people to sexual transmitted diseases. The HIV positive rate affecting young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years is at two percent in Waterberg District and with the other four districts recording below two percent positive rate.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We therefore need concerted efforts as government, civil society organizations, parents and the society at large to fight against teenage pregnancy and HIV. Social behavioral change must be central to all these efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen

These challenges that I have already alluded to prompted the province to deploy a multi-sectoral approach in the fight against HIV, which also affect young people. We have developed a Youth Project Plan with a specific focus to support the roll out of Youth Zones and Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services, encouraging young people to know their status and initiate them on treatment, encouraging young people to stay in school and develop themselves to be independent, the establishment of youth clubs to strengthen adherence to treatment and contraceptives and lastly the development of strategies to encourage young people to access health services through Cheka Mpilo campaign.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to also indicate that the Department of Health has made significant progress in the implementation of the Youth Project Plan. In March this year, Health Deputy Minister Dr. Sibongiseni Dhlomo officiated in the launch of the project at the Bungeni Stadium, where over 1500 young people attended the event. The great attendance there also assisted us in further creating an awareness to our people, mainly the youth. It was at that occasion where the Deputy Minister successfully launched the Collins Chabane Youth Project as part of the implementation plans.

Programme Director

Allow me to highlight that in response to this, the Department of Health under the stewardship of MEC Dr. Phophy Ramathuba is rendering services ranging from the implementation of Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services at Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities through youth zones, where

there is dedicated time for youth health services. In total, there are 217 facilities in the province, and all 35 of them are specifically found in the Collins Chabane Municipality. Learners are also targeted through Health education conducted through the Integrated School Health Programme and HIV Testing Services is also promoted amongst young people in health facilities and in communities through NGOs. To the young people who are here today, we also encourage you to go to those mobile facilities that have been set up at this venue to go and get tested.

As I conclude programme director, I want to indicate that as part of our multi-sectoral collaboration effort we have established the Limpopo Provincial Coordinating Forum, which is being coordinated by Office of the Premier in partnership with United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) which deals with

issues of young people in the reduction of teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, bullying and mental illness.

I am proud to announce that Vhembe District is the first to establish a similar forum at the district level and we are encouraging other districts to follow suit

The fight against HIV and social ills are not solely in the hands of the Department of Health, but also strategic Departments such as Social Development and Education. The department of Education plays a role of teaching comprehensive sexuality education and monitoring of learner pregnancy in schools. In the same breath we welcome a move by the education department of introducing a new policy for schools to report to the police should girls younger than 16-years, get impregnated by someone older than them. This will also assist us in exposing the sugar daddy syndrome, where older men prey on young girls and destroy their future. Lastly, the Department of Social Development provide psychosocial support to all those who are affected by teenage pregnancy, provide parenting skills to young mothers and ensure that it assist people who are vulnerable due to their socio-economic conditions through its poverty alleviation programmes.

I thank you! Kea leboga! Ndzakhensa! Ndolivua.