

Speech KZN MEC for Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the commemoration of the World AIDS Day 2009 in Dannhauser

1 December 2009

Amakhosi onke akhona

Mayors of all the Municipalities who are also Chairpersons of the Aids Councils

Councillors

Head of the KZN Social Development Dept – Mr Bheki Nkosi

District AIDS Council

Community leaders

Traditional Health Practitioners

Principals and Teachers

Members of the South African Police Services

Abezindaba

Onompilo

The youth

Malunga omphakathi ahloniphekile

The World AIDS Day is an International day of action on HIV and AIDS which takes place every year on 01 December and was established by the World Health Organization in 1988 to focus attention on the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Observance of this day provides an opportunity for governments, non-government organizations, churches, community organizations and individuals to demonstrate the importance of the fight against HIV and AIDS.

This year marks the 21 anniversary of the World AIDS day commemoration a significant milestone in that as a country and a nation we can reflect on the remarkable strides to minimize the challenges faced in containing and controlling the spiraling vortex of the disease as well as assessing past strategies in the wake of advanced medical and clinical practices. It is also a time to begin

embracing and acknowledging the contribution of various stake holders from both traditional and well modern spheres and establishing the renewed partnership with increased vigor.

Under the theme:

*"I am responsible,
We are responsible,
South Africa is taking responsibility",*

The 2009 World AIDS Day heralds a new era in the country's collective effort 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.

The theme encourages everyone in South Africa from Amakhosi, individuals, communities, church congregations, schools, social settings, businesses and government 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 message this year is clear; it says show that you are responsible by doing the following:

- Go for a HIV test. Test alone, test with your partner, with your friends or with your family.
- Wear a red ribbon to show your personal commitment to stopping new HIV infections and to providing care and support for people living with HIV.
- 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.
- Every time you start a new sexual relationship you should both be sure of your HIV status.
- Encourage pregnant women to test early in their pregnancy for HIV so that they can prevent their babies from getting infected with HIV.
- Communities to stop stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

Our Government under the leadership of **Hon President Jacob Zuma** says every South African living with HIV should be started with treatment at a particular level. This Government fully promotes the understanding that Anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment and good nutrition they do prolong and improve the lives of people living with HIV. We all should understand that successful treatment means being responsible for taking the medications every day as this is a life long commitment.

In the Amajuba District we are dealing with a population of **596 037** people of which **424 290** reside in Newcastle; 130 114 in Dannhauser and **41 633** at Emadlangeni. Estimated HIV prevalence in this area is **34.8%**.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the **Family Health International** for their immense contribution in the fight against HIV and Aids in this district. They have

selflessly given us the necessary tools we need in this war against this deadly but manageable disease in the form of:

- Mobile unit which provides a comprehensive service as well as;
- Staff to maintain these units.

Colleagues you have truly made our World Aids Day Commemoration a reality in this district and we hope your input will go a long way in our quest to produce an AIDS free generation.

My own mandate is to concentrate in this area hence on the 27th of October 2009 at Madadeni Community hall we introduced the Joint Cluster Flagship Programme to all stakeholders where we outlined what the **Hon Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize** expects us to achieve in this area. The following were highlighted:

- (i) Improved Treatment Adherence Measurement of TB defaulter rate must have decreased by 3% in 6 months,
- (ii) Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) partner tracing rate to have increased,
- (iii) Condom uptake to increase by 1% in 9 months,
- (iv) Decrease underweight for age by 0, 5 % in 1 year,
- (v) Increase school enrolment and attendance of orphans and vulnerable children by 100 %.
- (vi) Increase participation rate in sports and recreation activities, and
- (vii) Create sustainable human settlements by 2014.

Fortunately, as the MEC for Health it falls under my jurisdiction to see to it that we work with the households to reverse the rate of infection of the twin epidemics of TB and HIV.

Our message is that TB can be cured even in the presence of HIV infection but that without strong management at household level the combination of TB and HIV can have a devastating effect on patients.

We would also like our people to know that there is a strong link between HIV and TB and that from now onwards people should expect to be tested for TB if they are HIV positive and tested for HIV if they have TB.

Last month, our Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi released worrying statistics on child mortality in this country revealing a high percentage of children dying as a result of HIV. This ladies and gentlemen is highly unacceptable especially when there is help at hand. Again, in this regard we advice on the following:

- Every man and woman has the right to decide if and when they want to have a baby.
- Every man and woman has the responsibility to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.
- Every pregnant woman and her partner should visit a clinic as soon as she realises she is pregnant and they should test for HIV.
- Fathers, families, communities and healthcare workers should support women living with HIV so that they can make the best decisions for their babies during the pregnancy and after the birth.
- Every HIV positive pregnant woman should ask for and receive Anti-Retroviral (ARV) treatment to stay healthy and to prevent infecting her child with HIV.
- Every HIV positive mother has the right to decide whether to only breastfeed or to only use infant formula feeding. To make a decision she must discuss these choices with her health care worker.
- Every baby born to a HIV positive mother should be tested for HIV after six weeks.

- Every baby born with HIV has the right to receive Anti-Retroviral (ARV) treatment to improve its quality of life.

To the youth of our country we will all the time emphasis **abstinence** as it is the only 100% effective way to avoid having a baby and being infected with HIV. We appeal to all parents, community members, churches and elders to assume their responsibilities to assist, guide, protect and empower young people with knowledge and coping skills on how to deal with daily challenges facing them.

Our children also need to know that abstinence will deliver the following:

- good academic performance and achievement of future goals;
- free from sexual transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies; and
- free from psycho-social problems resultant from risky behaviours

We need to keep on advising young people that it is never too late to abstain because even those who have started engaging in sexual practices, they too reverse that and start abstaining.

To those who have not started, we are saying please delay and postpone until you are more mature and responsible enough to cope with the consequences of your choice, actions and decision.

Lastly, fellow compatriots, the World Aids Day happen within the 16 Days of Activism calendar and as such we are reminded of our responsibility to the women and children of this country. The United Nations defines violence against women as; *“any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”*.

Let us protect, defend and love the women and children of our land.

Remember, we are saying:

“I am responsible,
We are responsible,
South Africa is taking responsibility”,

Know your status campaign must be the theme of all the people of KwaZulu
Natal.

I thank you.