



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH, DR
SIBONGISENI DHLOMO DURING THE LAUNCH ADOLESCENT AND
YOUTH FRIENDLY SERVICES IN WILLOWVALE COMMUNITY
HEALTHCARE, EASTERN CAPE**

WEDNESDAY, 15 JUNE 2022

Thank you Programme Director, Hon Zolani Mkiva, my fellow MP and
Outstanding Champion of African Oral Traditions
Greetings to my colleague, MEC for Health Ms Nomakhosazana Meth
Representative from Nqadu Great Place
Executive Mayor of Mbhashe Local Municipality, Cllr Samkelo Janda
Rev Maposela, representing Eastern Cape Council of Churches
Representatives of partner organisations like LoveLife, Soul City
Other implementing Partners
All Young people in attendance
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning – Molweni – Sanibonani

We have gathered here today just a day before the National Youth Day
commemoration scheduled to take place in this province of Legends. On
Youth Day, South Africans pay tribute to the lives of the young people and

recognises the role they played in the liberation of South Africa from the chains of apartheid regime.

While we are mindful that life has got many complex challenges facing the young people of today, who are the leaders of tomorrow, access to essential and quality health services remains a serious challenge which cannot be ignored, and needs all hands on deck in order to overcome them.

We also acknowledge that other sectors of the society speak of economic freedom in their life, social protection and so forth, in health sector we speak of the struggle for long and healthy life for all. This struggle has got direct impact on the success of other life struggles, for example, you need to be healthy to study and to work, meaning academic and economic freedom go hand in hand with healthy life.

The success of the struggle for long and healthy life has got direct impact on the attainment of other goals of life. The struggle for healthy life cannot be achieved as long as majority of adolescent and young people remain at increased risk of mortality and morbidity associated with accidents, suicide, HIV/AIDS and STIs, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy related complications and other preventable and treatable conditions.

The South African adolescent and youth are facing various health challenges and social ills. Majority of HIV new incidence is at 30% amongst young people, and the country has observed an alarming rate in increase in teenage deliveries in health facilities, including for 10-14 years and 15-19 years old's.

This age group remains one of the priorities for the department and for the government. In response to these challenges facing young people with regards to access to primary health services, the department in consultation with various stakeholders within the sector, has developed and currently implementing the National Adolescent and Health policy 2017.

Some of the policy recommendations include the establishment of youth zones to fastrack the implementation of the Adolescent and Youth Friendly services (AYFS).

Because we are the government that listens to the people, we have paid attention to the concerns raised by young people as some of the reasons they don't go to our clinics to seek health services, especially sexual reproductive health services.

These perceived barriers for access to essential health services by adolescents and young adults include but are not limited to lack of youth-friendly training among staff, lack of a dedicated space for young people, waiting times due to inconvenient operating times and low numbers of staff, poor/judgemental staff attitudes, and stigma.

In order to address some of these challenges and increase uptake of health services by this cohort, while at the same time addressing some of the social problems, we have established 1,219 youth zones in our public health facilities across the country to create an enabling environment for young people to openly discuss their health challenges without fear of being judged. We also trained and placed young people or staff with an interest in working with young people.

It is my pleasure to indicate that 402 of them (Youth zones) were established in this province, and we encourage young people to lead in the design, implementation and monitoring of these youth zones to ensure they are used effectively to achieve their purpose.

We want to also make sure that they are customized to suit the needs of the young people, and for them to be more comfortable to use our facilities, access the extramural activities and health talks market and provide information on services available at the public health facilities.

Integration of programs, sexual reproductive health and rights, HIV prevention and treatment, tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases which is mainstream with gender-based violence is the vision of the department.

The aim is to ensure that young people are provided with comprehensive and integrated package of services without fear of judgment, and in their comfortable space. Health facilities are transformed to offer a conducive environment that is more acceptable by young people with the intention of improving access to health services.

Through these youth zones, barriers to uptake of health services are minimized, as young people themselves, lead in the planning and implementation of the youth zones. Wellbeing is not just the absence of disease or illness, it's a complex combination of physical, mental, emotional and social health factors.

As part of our efforts to protect our girls and young women who find themselves in a situation of unplanned pregnancy and opt to go to

backstreet sites to terminate, we have embarked on a campaign to promote safe, legal and free termination of pregnancy/abortion services in our dedicated health facilities.

We would like to remind our girls and young women that all people make mistakes, but unsafe abortion is not a solution to unwanted and unplanned pregnancy. Unsafe abortion is a preventable life-threatening procedure which contribute to maternal mortality in South Africa.

Most of these unplanned pregnancies result in unsafe abortions performed at backstreet sites by unqualified people without experience who gamble with the lives of our people for profiteering reasons. These youth zones also serve a purpose for girls to share challenges such as unplanned pregnancy with healthcare workers who will advise them on a number of safe options.

We know that not everyone can abstain from sexual activities, but we have different types of contraceptives such as condoms to prevent unplanned pregnancies, HIV and other STIs.

Unsafe abortion can lead to physical and mental health complications and social and financial burdens for women, communities and health systems. Lack of access to safe, timely, affordable and respectful abortion care is a critical public health and human rights issue, hence we encourage women to exercise their constitutional right responsibly by demanding safe abortion from health facilities, instead to risking their lives.

It is important that young people are targeted to contribute towards achieving the 90 90 90 targets. Adolescent Girls and Young women are more assertive and demand the respect they deserve being in control of their own destiny. Adolescent Boys and Young men are capacitated to

respect their fellow human beings and be gentlemen, including the consequences and impact of violence.

Let me take this opportunity to remind everyone that we are still living with COVID-19 pandemic and we should continue to vaccinate and get booster doses. Last week we announced second booster dose for all those who are 50 years and older like myself.

I have committed to the youth programme managers in the department that, I will continue to support their activities organized in collaboration with our partner stakeholders like Soul City and Lovelife who share the same goal with government.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the good work done by our implementing partners to address the challenges facing our young people. We need to strengthen our teamwork, identify our gaps, and complement each other instead of competing against one another. I would like to further urge you young people to access the youth zones to get the services that you need.

Gender-Based violence remains a serious issue of concern, and we need to support the victims who are women in majority to break the silence so the perpetrators can face the law. Most of these GBV cases are linked to substance abuse, alcohol and drugs in particular, and contribute to poor academic outcomes.

I thank you
Ndiyabulela