

**Speech by the District Executive Mayor during District Aids Day
Celebration, Masilo Stadium, 05 December 2007**

Programme Director

Mayors

Speakers

Councillors

District Aids Council and Local Aids Council Members

Officials present

HIV&AIDS NGOs and CBOs

Ladies and gentlemen

I want acknowledge the work that our communities are doing to augment government programme. Let us give greatly deserved recognition to those groups and organizations who have dedicated themselves to the fight against AIDS – and embarked on a campaign to educate, communities and providing care.

But despite the efforts of our partners, there is still a great task to perform. Despite twenty five years' experience of tackling this pandemic, a greater number of our people might die as a result of AIDS during the course of this event. That statement signifies the cruelty of this disease. We are witnessing not just the wide scale loss of life. We're witnessing the loss of the economic lifeblood of some of the world's poorest countries.

This year's theme '**Stop Aids. Keep the promise**' It' is a wise choice that reminds people of their behaviour. Informing and educating them is the most effective tool to reduce the spread of this disease.

We are coming a long way when people could not talk about Aids. Now people are far more relaxed and inclined to talk about the disease now than they were before.

But of course in so many parts of the country we still have silence on the subject that is driven by fear and suspicion.

Some of AIDS patients are shunned and made outcasts in their villages and in areas where they live when it is known they are AIDS sufferers. Therefore we should stand by ourselves to fight this disease as it is like any other disease.

We are taking this very seriously as district hence antiretroviral are provided in some hospitals in the district.

Intensifying prevention efforts will be crucial if we are to avoid this disease.

Raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and educating people about how they can avoid being infected must feature heavily in our AIDS programs as municipalities.

Our commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS must be displayed by our big allocations towards HIV/AIDS during budgeting processes and IDP.

To cement District's leadership role on HIV/AIDS in the district, we will be working with the private sector to signal to the region's political and business leaders that preventing the spread of the pandemic requires a sustained public-private partnership.

This partnership between government and business has the potential to transform the response to AIDS in the district.

Partnerships can work very well. Partnerships with communities, with all levels of government and the health sector can help keep our infection rates low.

We can't afford to be complacent. Many people here live with the virus and it remains a major concern for our community. We have to be vigilant-we have to keep talking about the virus so that people don't drop their guard.

Programme Director

HIV/AIDS isn't going to go away. We cannot provide treatment but prevention is clearly what we are seeking.

Faith has quietly become one of the most influential forces in the struggle against HIV and AIDS. The resources of governments may be vast, and the good works of philanthropists may be abundant, but we should never underestimate how powerful the passion of people of faith can be in eradicating this disease.

We need to show people that just going to the any doctor or clinic for a blood test there is no shame in going for an HIV test. Because while there was once a time when a positive result gave little hope, today the earlier you know, the faster you can get help and encourage others in public life to do the same. We've got to spread the word to as many people as possible. It's time for us to set an example for others to follow.

I am pleased to announce the presence of Lesedi Lechabile who are here to provide the services of ***Voluntary Counselling and Confidential Testing. People should come out here today knowing their status.***

We need a renewed emphasis on nutrition. Right now we're finding out that there are people who are on the drugs, who are getting treatment, who are still dying because they don't have any food to eat. This is inexcusable hence the district has come up with poverty alleviation packs for the vulnerable people.

But the reason for us to step up our efforts can't simply be instrumental. There are more fundamental reasons to care. Reasons related to our own humanity. Reasons of the soul.

So please support those with HIV, talk about the virus with your children, your partner, friends and colleagues.

I thank you.