

SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF LEJWELEPUTSWA
DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, MR. S NGANGELIZWE, AT THE DISTRICT
CHILDREN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS, ROVERS CLUB, 08 NOVEMBER 2007

Programme Director
Mayors
Speakers
MMCs present here
Councillors
Officials
And children and their Guardians present here

Today is a special day for children as we are gathered here to celebrate Children's Day with our children.

This is the continuation of what we attended last week when the children of our country assembled in Bloemfontein to celebrate National Children's Day. In that celebration, Leaders spoke to our children about their rights and refer to them as a resource to the country. As we groom our children we should teach them good morals and societal values whilst they are still at an early age.

Your parents fought hard and long for all of you to become our future. You, children, are what we get up every morning for - to prepare the future.

As pronounced by the Constitution of the country, all children have rights to survival, protection from any form of exploitation and harm, the right to develop to be best citizens in their own way, and the right to participate and their voices to be heard. When we say all children, we mean all children.

Even children with special needs have a right to special care. Children with disabilities also have a right to special care. Orphaned children (through whatever means) and vulnerable children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS have a right to special care. Children affected by abuse, neglect and violence have a right to special care. Whether children are living on the streets or are in conflict with the law they are still children, our children, and they have a right to special care.

Child Protection is Everybody's Business. The guiding principle we are committing ourselves to is "Child Protection is Everybody's Business" ensuring that in whatever we do be it policy, programmes or actions we consider what will be in the best interest of the child.

It is an abuse to beat up a child. It is an abuse to deny a child education. So, It is to deny a child food and water as well as to abandon a child and not pay maintenance.

Each of us elders here has a duty to protect children. It's not only the job of the police, the

prosecutors, and the welfare authorities to keep children safe and act as their custodians. It is the obligation of the religious leaders, it is the duty of the media, and the duty of every one of us.

Children are vulnerable because they cannot defend themselves. They depend on us as adults to protect and defend them. We have a responsibility, which means that we are entrusted with a duty to do the right thing even if nobody is checking or watching us.

Children have responsibilities too. Whilst you have rights as children, you also have a responsibility to respect the rights of others. You have to take responsibility of your actions. You have a responsibility to love, respect and share with your families. You have a responsibility to go to school and learn and not involve yourselves in drugs, violence and any other crime. Don't commit crime, cheat at school, vandalize buildings or steal. Take care of our environment, don't litter, waste food or water. You need to learn from your mistakes and not repeat them.

Lack of access to social security, including social welfare, education and health services rank high as challenges to children's well being especially in rural areas and informal settlements. Poverty, unemployment and absence of adequate services are some of the reasons given for children's lack of access to services. Yet another factor contributing to children's lack of access to services relates to their right to an identity. Large numbers of children are unable to access vital services because they do not own a birth certificate, or their parents/caregivers are without identity documents. As duty-bearers we have a responsibility, we owe our children a decent life. In response to these challenges, the district with the help of the Premier's Office will be establishing multi purpose centres wherein all the government services will be available for easy access.

The UBuntu philosophy (humanity) dictates that it takes the entire community to raise the child and that is why we should commit ourselves to the theme "**Child Protection is Everybody's Business**".

Most of the children are growing in families that are living below the poverty line. Poverty in South Africa means that many children grow up without having their basic needs met. HIV and AIDS have made this situation even more difficult. We must have their needs met by us as government, by families as well as communities. If we are serious about ensuring that our children grow into responsible, capable and caring adults we need to take care of them now.

Let our children enjoy the fruits of our liberation and make them the leaders of tomorrow.

I thank you and wish you well for your future.