



KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY GAUTENG HEALTH MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (MEC), DR BANDILE MASUKU at Gauteng Youth Expo, 14 JUNE 2019, NASREC HALL 10

Programme Director;

Department of Health HOD: Professor Lukhele

Gauteng Provincial Government Officials;

Distinguished guests;

Learners and the youth;

Good Morning,

The month of June is one of the most significant months for South Africa as it is a stark reminder of the evils that make up the history of our country, as well as the fighting spirit and revolutionary commitment to justice, freedom and equality as displayed by the youth of 1976. It is indeed our revolutionary task as the youth and members of society to continuously reflect on the events of our past in a way that shapes how we think about our future to the effect that we are enabled to define our opportunities and responsibilities in the building of a democratic society that serves the interests of all South Africans irrespective of their race, gender, class position or background.

Youth month forces us to remember that we have as a nation have overcome an oppressive apartheid regime that treated Blacks as second-class citizens – lower class

people who had no value to add to society apart from serving the interests of their white masters and a government that did not care about their identity and growth. In this month we commemorate specifically the 16 June 1976 uprisings by the students of Soweto who were protesting an official order which made Afrikaans compulsory in black township schools throughout the country.

The apartheid government prohibited the use of African languages in Black schools and forcefully elected that Afrikaans and English be made the official languages of the country, and Afrikaans serve as the main language of teaching all subjects. Some of your grandmothers, uncles, mothers and fathers refused to accept that the reality of being taught Science, Mathematics and all subjects in a language they were not fluent in. In resistance to this, they mobilised themselves and made their voices heard by taking to the streets in protest.

They said no to be bullied and forced into a life of mediocrity where they would be constrained in utilizing their mental capacities. They said no to a government that stripped away their parents the dignity and respect that they deserved. They said no to the violence on Black bodies because of a reactionary separate development policy that did not benefit them. In that winter of 1976 many were injured, killed and forced to flee – leaving their family and friends for a cause which was greater than them. A cause for freedom.

Today, 16 June is a South African public holiday. There are Youth Day celebrations which are held country wide in order to empower individuals of all ethnicities in South Africa and to remember those who sacrificed their lives for our democracy.

Although the year 2019 marks 25 years of a democratic South Africa, it is not without challenges. Many of these challenges being in the department of which I lead, the Gauteng Department of Health. Some of the challenges that we are faced with as a

country in the health sector include HIV and AIDS, mental and reproductive health as well as inadequate knowledge on understanding illnesses and how to treat them.

In responding to the HIV pandemic, the Department of Health, has rolled out PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) Pilot Project in all the three (3) Metros and to be later rolled out to all Health Districts, targeting TVET Colleges. This is done to ensure that the department reduces HIV infection especially among young people who are at risk of being infected, statistics revealing that there are 1 700 young girls and women between the ages of 15-24 who are infected weekly, and there being 25 373 young children on Anti-Retro Viral treatment. SHE Conquers is a national campaign led by young women aimed at promoting life skills for economic empowerment and keeping girls in schools until they matriculate in order to manage the spread of HIV among young women and girls specifically.

As a department we are striving towards achieving the 90-90-90- Strategy by 2020 which is a strategy aimed at ensuring that 90% of people know their HIV status, 90% of those who are HIV positive must be on treatment, and 90% of those who are on treatment have their HIV viral load undetectable. We are striving to have an HIV free society and to do this, we offer ARVs to everyone who tests positive irrespective of their CD-4 cell count, as well as to HIV positive mothers to eliminate mother to child transmission of HIV.

Programme Director, we are going to use the next five years to prioritise reproductive health and family planning especially for young women and girls to deal with teenage pregnancy and cancers that specifically affect females. We are concerned by the percentages of learners who fall pregnant, hence our promotion of the use of dual methods of contraception. The Department of Health is providing all types of contraceptive methods including long acting reversible contraceptives (implant and the intra uterine contraceptive device commonly known as a loop). The Department of Health offers termination of pregnancy on request, including in instances of rape or incest. Young people who are sexually active are encouraged to use both condoms and contraceptives

because contraceptives cannot protect you from the Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV.

The Department of Health has adopted an Outreach Programme to TVET Colleges that was designed and piloted by ANOVA Health Institute that is bringing sexual reproductive health services to centres that do not have onsite Campus Health Services like Universities in the province. For us to grow South Africa and raise a nation with healthy and productive citizens, it is critical that we need to employ health interventions that are structured such that they adequately respond to health issues from cradle to grave. One of the priorities for the department in this term is to introduce public health literacy programmes for residents of Gauteng, more-so the young people. This health literacy intervention will be aimed at educating society about prevention, treatment and management of illnesses to give people control of their health and well-being, while alleviating pressure on the state for services that can be managed well outside of the traditional clinic and hospital visits.

It is a great distress that we as a country are faced with an unfortunate reality of high levels of substance abuse, Gender Based Violence, teenage and learner pregnancies, mental illness, bullying and cyber bullying are ravaging our youth. In addressing the challenges with substance abuse in our communities, we have partnered with the Department of Social Development and currently run projects such as *Ke Moja* which encourages learners from using drugs and rehabilitates those who are struggling with addiction to substances such as drugs and alcohol.

Many women and girls in the country and our province have been victims of Gender-Based Violence inflicted not only by strangers, but also by people who they know and have a relationship with. The levels of Gender-Based Violence in the country reflect a deep-seated issue that includes mental health. As a nation and as society, we have not done enough to confront and address the reality that is mental health illness and the levels

that it is rooted in our homes, communities and schools. For many years' society has dismissed depression, anxiety and other disorders without acknowledging their impacts and the extent that these can go in contributing to suicide and a broken society.

It is in the best interests of our province to address this scourge that silently kills many young people and destroys futures and homes. As a department, we will use the next five years to strategically address this pandemic especially amongst our youth. An aspect of this is prioritizing the personal development of the youth. The Department of Health in partnership with LoveLife has allocated 135 young groundBreakers who are employed to mentor and coach in 121 health care facilities, mainly Primary Health Care clinics. They, groundBreakers, together with 'iMpintshis" are Peer Educators working in clinics with Youth-Friendly Services and in targeted schools.

Allow me to acknowledge the contributions made by the Department in sending some of the students to Cuba to be trained as doctors. In terms of the Bilateral Agreement, the Nelson Mandela Fidel Castro (NMFC) Medical Program 6 doctors have qualified and on 24 months' internship, 73 students back in SA for 18 months Integration, 352 students remain in Cuba in different years of training.

This year the Gauteng Department of Health will recruit a new cohort of young people to be trained on the program after developing a strict criterion for academic, health and psycho-social well-being appropriate for successfully completion of studies in Cuba. The department has an increasing clinical training platform for young Health Care Trainee Professionals to gain workplace experience before registering as independent practitioners in compliance with statutory requirements.

This calendar year of 2019 the department has registered in its system 1 385 Professionals - Medical Interns and Doctors, Pharmacists and interns, Radiographers,

Clinical Psychologists and interns, Speech and Hearing Therapists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Dieticians, Nursing and Environmental Health Practitioners.

For those of you who are interested in pursuing a career in health, the Department also offers bursaries for courses such as nursing and allied professions like radiography, physiotherapy, dentistry and speech therapy to mention a few.

As a generation that has enjoyed a democratic South Africa that is without segregation, oppression and institutional injustice, I encourage you to always make the most of every opportunity that arises for you to make improve yourselves and the lives of your families and communities. Borrowing from the words of former President Nelson Mandela – ‘Education is the most powerful tool with which you can change the world.’

With these words, let me thank every one of you for making time, to attend this important annual event where we commemorate this important day in history and celebrate the prospects of a just and equal tomorrow. May we always remember the sacrifices that have been made for us to enjoy this democracy and all its benefits. Happy Youth Month!

I thank You!