



GAUTENG PROVINCE

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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GAUTENG HEALTH MEC CALLS ON COMMUNITIES TO JOIN HANDS IN ADDRESSING TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND OTHER SOCIAL ILLS

As part of the Gauteng Provincial Government back-to-school campaign, MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko today visited three secondary schools in Kwa-Thema and Langaville townships in Ekurhuleni district. The purpose of the visit was to assess the state of readiness for the academic year, engage the learners and teachers on issues affecting the schooling environment.

One of the common and pressing issues highlighted across all three schools (Nkumbulo Secondary School, Zimisele High School and Langaville Secondary School) is teenage pregnancy. Statistics on the number of teenagers giving birth at our facilities are alarming. In this current financial year, over 13 700 babies were born of teenage mothers across public health facilities in the province.

In an effort to address this issue, the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has established Youth Zones within some facilities – which are safe spaces offering Youth Friendly Services, dedicated for the youth, mentored by young healthcare workers to address health issues affecting both young males and females. In addition, the department has also partnered with Supporting Partners such as Love Life, Wits RHI, Shout it Now, Anova, Soul City, Triggerise, Mobile Health Clinics and #KeReady to promote health amongst learners and youth.

Together with sister departments of Social Development, Basic Education, and multiple other stakeholders, the GDoH will this year intensify integrated interventions to address the factors contributing to the scourge of teenage pregnancy.

“The challenge of teenage pregnancy is a societal one and requires a transdisciplinary and collective approach. All sector of society must play an active role in addressing this pandemic effectively. I would like to urge every member of society to join hands with government in empowering our

learners with information that will enable them to make informed decisions without jeopardising their future”, said MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

Other issues that were raised include the rise in incidents of learner suicides, substance abuse, gangsterism and bullying.

“These social ills pose a direct threat to the safety and well-being of our children. It is therefore imperative that we take a united stand against them and work towards eradicating them from our schools,” stated the MEC.

Later during a stakeholder engagement at Kwa-Thema Community Hall MEC Nkomo-Ralehoka called on the community to also take a stand against vandalism.

“Another issue of great concern that has been brought to my attention during my visits to the local schools is the vandalism of school infrastructure. It is disheartening to witness the damage caused to these places of learning that are meant to be safe and nurturing spaces for our children's education.

“Vandalism takes service delivery a thousand steps backwards, it diverts funds that could be used for educational resources, and it also shows that as a community we do not value the importance of education. I want to urge you all to join hands and take a collective stand against vandalism in our schools. We all have the responsibility to protect the public infrastructure for the betterment of our communities.”

Nkomo-Ralehoko committed to ensure that the issues raised at the schools and by the stakeholders will form part of the agenda of the Gauteng Provincial Government in order to escalate measures of intervention.

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