

MEC MORAKANE MOSUPYOE KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON OCASSION OF PARK HOMES LAUNCH IN WEMBLEY STADIUM

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Programme Director,

MMC for Health and Social Development in the COJ, Cllr Eunice Mgcina

Ladies and gentlemen

1. Annually, on the 10 October, globally various stakeholders observe World Homeless Day. World Homeless Day is observed to draw attention to people who experience homelessness and their needs and to provide opportunities for the community to get involved in responding to homelessness.
2. As Social Development we resolved that this year our objectives would be focused on promoting the collaboration of different stakeholders in delivering effective and efficient services to families, to create awareness on the plight of the homeless and the contribution members of the public can make towards addressing homelessness and educate homeless people about the different services offered by various stakeholders.
3. Numerous experts have purported the crisis of homelessness as a phenomenon that is complex and defies simplified definitions. As Social Development we agree with this sentiment.
4. In our own research and work we have found that the problem of homelessness is interconnected with other social ills, as the homeless sometimes engage in behaviour such substance abuse which makes it difficult to escape from homelessness. Furthermore, we have found that consequences of homelessness as observed by sociologists include but not limited to social, economic, political, cultural, educational, psychological spheres and deepening of poverty in society.
5. When we look closely into the crisis of homelessness with the intention of a deeper understanding of its consequences I've mentioned. One finds that the impact of apartheid legislations on households led to the emergence of homelessness in South

Africa, through forced removals, uprooting, legislated landlessness, denial of documentation and the homeland system.

6. Furthermore, internal migration, mainly from rural to urban settlements accounts for the extent of homelessness in our Cities. Provinces like ours have a continuous influx of people from previously economically disadvantaged provinces in search of better service delivery and living conditions, including jobs. Besides the internal migration, immigration of people from other countries into South African cities forms part of the consequences of homelessness.
7. The Covid-19 pandemic had devastating effects on the economy. Recently, we learned about the ghastly unemployment rate in our country. During the lockdown that ensued we witnessed numerous social ills at an all-time rise and unemployment was one of them. However, unemployment has never been at an acceptable rate both during and after apartheid, especially amongst youth, women, and the black population in general. Unemployment is one of the phenomenon's that have led to the unsustainability of families and households, and consequently leading to homelessness.
8. Other phenomenon's that are the driving forces of homelessness include social exclusion and cultural rights. This is a condition where a society is not mutually and equally accommodating to all people that belong to it, irrespective of their social categorization. For instance, the LGBTQIA+ youth are said to be at greater risk of homelessness. Recently in an article, I read that *for some members of the LGBTQIA+ community, 'coming out of the closet' equals a fast-track to homelessness. Whether they're kicked out of the house by parents or partners, or shunned by their communities, queer individuals often end up with nowhere to go and no one to turn to.*
9. There are numerous social ills that fuel homelessness, that cannot all be highlighted in one day. However, as Gauteng Government we have considered both the contributing factors and outcomes. We will be able to support the homeless through a range of interventions, such as treatment for substance abuse, provision of health and mental health services, skills development to facilitate job creation, shelter and housing, and reintegration.
10. Not all of those impacted by South Africa's structural challenges experience homelessness. Thus, personal circumstances also influence the state of homelessness.

The top reasons for heading to the streets include experiences with abuse and domestic violence, family problems, eviction, economic difficulties at home, and a search for independence or a better life.

11. While there is emphasis of exiting homeless people through various programmes, as Social Development we want to emphasise that for as long as there are persistent socio-economic challenges homelessness will continue to be a challenge. Furthermore, we contend homelessness cannot be eradicated completely there will always be people who become homeless for various reasons. What remains critical is to have a well-functioning integrated system that can respond at any given time and have need based responsive programmes
12. Before the Covid-19 lockdown the Department of Social Development provided funding to 4 non-Governmental permanent shelters, 3 in Johannesburg and 1 in Sedibeng regions.
13. However, as a response to the COVID-19 Disaster, the Gauteng Government established new shelters and strengthened existing municipality run shelters. Currently, the population of the homeless in Shelters across Gauteng is approximately 3000, with 892 in Johannesburg, 1809 in Tshwane 1809 accounting for the larger portion followed by 95 in Sedibeng and 30 in Westrand as at 28 July 2021.
14. Our Strategy on homelessness is premised on the understanding that a person's pathway into homelessness is driven by amongst others, the intersection of structural drivers, (such as housing affordability, labour market forces), risk factors (such as financial stress, family breakdown), and protective factors (such as employment, involvement in community).
15. Today, as we launch the Wembly Stadium Park Homes, as Social Development we are thankful to all Stakeholders that have played a part in ensuring this is possible. Ending homelessness can only be attained through a multi-stakeholder approach, in which communities, civil society organizations, government agencies and private sector work together to implement systematic responses that will help prevent recurring homelessness.
16. Thank you!