

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HER WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF
LEPELLE-NKUMPI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY COUNCILLOR IVY
PHAAHLA ON THE OCCASSION OF INAUGURATION OF
LOCAL AIDS COUNCIL AND LOCAL AIDS COUNCIL TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE AT MUNICIPAL CIVIC HALL.**

20 SEPTEMBER 2012.

Programme Director;

Pastor Rasemane;

Our Chief Whip, Veteran Molaba;

Members of Executive Committee present;

Members of District Aids Council and its constituent structures;

Leaders of Faith Based Organizations;

Representatives of Traditional Leaders;

Representatives of Traditional Healers;

Our Esteemed Partners representing different sectors;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Re a lotsha.

The inauguration of Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Aids Council and Local Aids Council Technical Committee marks a major milestone in the history of our caring and responsive municipality. It is on this day that we recommit ourselves to work tirelessly to achieve the goals of our National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS.

We also recommit ourselves to strengthen our efforts and leadership, commitment and accountability in the response to the spread of HIV and AIDS.

We are also reminded to keep the pledges we made in the past eighteen years of our democracy. We also recommit ourselves to voluntarily test for HIV in order to know our status and take appropriate measures depending on test results.

As municipality we commit ourselves to extend a helping hand to those who need care and support, to children in need of care and support, and to vulnerable women, people living with disabilities and the aged in our communities.

There is no one amongst us who has not been affected by the scourge of HIV and AIDS. All of us have families, friends and colleagues who have HIV or have been sick with TB or AIDS.

Some of us have lost people who were close to us and have ended up helping to raise children who have lost a mother or father to AIDS.

When we inaugurate this Local Aids Council and Local Aids Technical Committee, we remember the personal losses we have experienced from the epidemic and recognize the contributions made by all of you as families, friends, carers, community organizations, business, labour and government employees.

Programme Director;

I take this opportunity to encourage males to come forward to government designated facilities to be circumcised as this procedure minimizes chances of HIV infection.

Government's efforts once more to encourage pregnant women to test for HIV have resulted in an increase in an uptake of health facilities with ante-natal-care services. Statistics have shown that we are now witnessing notable reduction in deaths of babies, mothers and adults due to better treatment, but more can still be done.

It is very important that we should get tested regularly and take our loved ones along. Testing and early diagnosis helps to take appropriate action depending on your results and status.

If someone is ill, I plead with them not to wait until it is too late. Take action, talk to the person and involve their family or close friends. If we start treatment on time we can save lives.

If people go to health facilities when they are already ill, it may be too late. There are trained nurses to provide antiretroviral treatment (ART).

We are encouraged that government is committed to ensure that pregnant women should not die from HIV and AIDS, and babies should not become infected with HIV. The first course of action for everyone is to practice safe sex, and avoid multiple partners.

If you are already pregnant, please go to antenatal clinics, don't wait. We want to see you at clinics during three months of pregnancy so that professionals can control complications which might arise. Early treatment for mothers will stop unnecessary deaths and protect the baby from HIV infection.

Pregnant women who are infected with HIV must get treatment and follow up the treatment to protect their health so that the baby is born healthy and HIV free.

Programme Director;

Babies grow better on breastfeeding and breast milk reduces all kinds of illness in babies. As a result, it is now government policy that mothers who are HIV positive should breastfeed their babies.

We are pleased that government will continue to provide Nevirapine to breastfed babies to protect them from HIV infection through breast milk. Mothers need to breastfeed for six months and not mix breast and milk formula. Mixing breastfeeding and milk formula increases chances of HIV infection in babies.

In unfortunate circumstances where babies get infected with HIV, our government start treatment with Anti-Retroviral Treatment straight away. As government we have evidence that HIV infected babies can grow up normally while taking Anti-Retroviral Treatment.

Programme Director;

I take this opportunity to plead with families of people who are on Anti-Retroviral Treatment to support them. They need your support to live normal lives. With same breath, I also plead with people who are on Anti-Retroviral Treatment to take responsibility and look after their health. Even if the viral load in your body is undetectable, continue practising safe sex. If you don't, you run the risk of re-infection with multiple strains of HIV. The challenge that still faces us is that of reducing new infections.

The message of: ABSTAIN, BE FAITHFUL AND CONDOMISE, remains as relevant as ever before. We all know that there is no cure for HIV and AIDS yet, therefore, prevention remains paramount.

I therefore urge everybody to go for HIV tests regularly in order to determine what steps to take if they discover that they are HIV positive. If you have tested negative, strive to remain negative. I urge all sectors, to continue working together with government to conquer HIV and AIDS.

Programme Director;

It is the great honour for me to inaugurate the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Aids Council and Local Aids Council Technical Committee. I wish you the best in your responsibilities. Let this be the start of an era of openness, of taking personal responsibility, and of working together in unity to prevent HIV infections and to deal with its impact.

Working together, we can achieve these goals!!

I THANK YOU!!

KE A LEBOGA!!