

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MRS. H.J MASHAMBA, AT THE EVENT OF WORLD POPULATION DAY, SETTLERS, BELA-BELA MUNICIPALITY.

3rd October 2016

Programme Director;

The Executive Mayor of Waterberg District Municipality, Cllr. Morris Mataboge;

The Mayor of Bela-Bela Local Municipality, Cllr. Jeremiah Ngobeni;

The HOD for Social Development, Ms. Daphne Ramokgopa;

Our esteemed traditional leadership;

Members of faith-based organisations and NPO's;

Ladies and gentlemen;

All protocol observed.

Today we gather here to reflect on issues that affects communities worldwide. It is important for us to note, as South Africans, that some of the problems we face are not unique to our country or our society. Throughout the world, people are grappling with a number of societal issues. One of the many issues is the future of our youth.

Programme Director

The Department of Social Development has a mandate to care for vulnerable members of society and to achieve self-reliant communities, biased to people living with disabilities, older persons and in particular women and children. Our teen girls are, of course, included in the latter.

The Department has managed to improve services to the most vulnerable citizens of Limpopo

province. The 2011 census show that Limpopo is predominantly rural and youthful. The Province has the highest proportion of people aged 20 years and older, with no schooling, as compared to other provinces. This makes our mandate of providing a social safety net and ensuring sustainable development within communities, as per the National Development Plan's Vision 2030, ever challenging.

We are proud to announce that the 2016/17 budget is focusing directly on the empowerment of women and the youth. The emphasis is also on strategic support and creation of sustainable livelihoods, in an attempt to graduate families out of social protection such as grants.

The fight against HIV/AIDS is a global one and the Department's contribution, through its HIV/AIDS programme is commendable. This is because of the progress reports on institutional support of HIV and AIDS to those infected and affected by it, such as orphans and child-headed households.

The department further renders anti-substance abuse and treatment programmes; services to older persons; Early Childhood Development and fighting the scourge of poverty, through interventions by the department's Community Development Programme.

We acknowledge that this will not be possible without the assistance of our stakeholders and agencies.

Programme Director

Today I have the great pleasure of commemorating 2016 World Population Day with you. World Population Day is an annual event celebrated on 11 July to raise awareness of global population issues.

A common theme is released each year, influenced by global status quo (e.g. remember the hash tag 'BRING BACK OUR GIRLS'). The 2016 World Population Day's theme is: 'Investing in Teen Girls'. We note that there are 736 991 estimated girls population aged between 10 and 19 years in Limpopo (2011 census); and these teens are included in the 7.4 Billion World population estimate.

Investing in Teen Girls

I am happy to announce that by the virtue of the department's mission and vision, we have been investing in teen girls as part of our vulnerable clientele. Researchers will agree with me that Teen Girls globally face more different challenges than their teen male counterparts. In most countries, a girl who reaches puberty is still deemed by her family and community as ready for marriage, pregnancy and childbirth. She may be married off and forced to stop schooling. She may suffer unhealthy condition from delivering a child before her body is ready for it. She may be denied her human rights. etc. Their appalling condition becomes better to a certain extent in countries with Democracy like the RSA.

Compatriots, you will agree with me that the obstacles faced by a Teen Girls multiply if they belong to an ethnic minority, live in rural villages

and are from poor households. Any illiterate Teen Girl, living in poor general health and with No little or control over her own sexual reproductive health and rights, her potential future dreams may not be achieved. Contrary to this, Teen Girls who are holistically informed, provided with means to make her own positive decisions in life, the likelihood is higher for her to become a light bulb in a dark county. I edge each one of us to invest in Teen Girls in order to sustain our economy from our youth demographic dividend.

Today we are commemorating the belated World Population Day, i.e, the 11 July past but in Limpopo, we value this day. This day gives Limpopo Department of Social Development a platform to advocate Population Policy for SA, 1998. We use this platform to conduct Population Advocacy in Information, Education and

Communication (IEC). Believe me my fellow Africans, after this speech, you will be informed, educated and the Teen Girls challenges would have been communicated to you this way:

What does investing in Teen Girls means?

- If girls are given a chance to stay in school, get access to health services, delay marriages and childbirth, receive quality education, this will benefit Teen's future children, households, communities, and countries. From now on, let's go keep Teen Girls in school to receive at least a quality secondary education. This is a big strategic way of investing in Teen Girls.
- It means, together as our Stakeholders, let's improve reproductive health - including access to family planning services to Teen Girls. Maternal health and related issues like Maternal and Infant Mortality are critical concepts for the development

and wellbeing of these girls as explained in Millennium Development Goals. It is only fair for our Democracy to capacitate Teen Girls in Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), so that Teen Girls assist us and Governments in reducing family and school-related gender-based violence.

- It means we have to observe Gender Equity at all facets.
- It means, we should remove ceilings above their heads – the sky will be a limit only to your informed Teen Girl. etc

My beloved audience, I hope that you now believe me that you are being informed and educated in relation to investing in Teen Girls, but to arm you further on what you should do from here as we are going to depart, be informed that there are suggested activities for World Population Day, of which my department has incorporated into our

targets and spent a significant budget on the activities through Advocacy in IEC program. Let's join hands to go through the following check list with you while checking if your institution is on the right track in terms of Population Policy of SA, 1998:

- Give teenage girls a voice! Invite teenage girls to talk or write about the challenges they face and how they are confronting them.

People who attended 2015 WPD have seen this practically at Lebowakgomo Hall when the youth from different districts talk about their challenges. We were shocked to hear that Sekhukhune youths mix a 'waterpas water into 25 litre bucket and drink as alcohol".

- Launch social media campaigns to amplify awareness of teenage girls' needs, including sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Limpopo Department of Social Development goes on air – Energy FM to talk about social population concerns weekly on Wednesdays, including SRHR information and services.

- Let media know about the successes of youth-led organizations: develop press kits and hold press conferences to get the word out.

The department wish to partner with expert when the budget allows – please come forth to collaborate with us in this area if you have capacity.

- Invite government officials to make public statements about the need to invest in teenage girls.

The department has trained more than 500 adolescent boys & girls on SRHR and youths across the province. Without bombarding you with lots of actions to do, it will suffice to endeavour in:

- Publicizing success stories of programmes that help girls delay marriage and pregnancy and avoid HIV.
- Holding intergenerational workshops, debates and seminars on the rights of young people
- Involving the most marginalized and most in need girls (with appropriate protections).

- Emphasizing the benefits to development of investing in education for girls, and sexuality education.
- Highlighting the positive steps taken towards young people's needs and rights in your country, and needed action.
- Documenting and publicizing success stories about sexual and reproductive health and rights showing positive results.

In wrapping up, you now fully agree with me that I was able to turn you into an informed Population and Development Activist. I am happy boys are here also to be educated through the Siyakwazi Youth Network program. I hope that you will enjoy the Siyakwazi Network Camp responsibly. This is the platform given to you to learn about outcomes which impacts on our livelihoods negatively due to uninformed decisions you make in related to

intercourse matters. You are our household's 'mirrors' - show Siyakwazi trainers that Limpopo youths has manners. I thank you all.

END

Programme Director;

Allow me to elaborate a little bit on the significance of this day. In 1989, the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme recommended that 11th July annually be observed by the international community as World Population Day.

This is a day to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues. This year's theme is **"Investing in teenage girls"**.

Over six hundred million teenage girls live in the world today and are experiencing a time of transition, full of physical, psychological, emotional and economic changes, as they leave childhood and enter adulthood. Teenage girls around the world face enormous challenges. Many are considered by their communities or parents to be ready for marriage and motherhood. Many are forced from school, which damages their future prospects. Even among girls who stay in school, access to basic information about their health, human rights and reproductive rights can be hard to come by, leaving them vulnerable to illness, injury and exploitation.

Yet, when teenage girls are empowered; when they know their rights and when they are given the tools to succeed, they become agents of positive change in their communities.

Young people in South Africa make up the greatest proportion of the population, with over 37 percent of the country's population. Teenage girls make up 7 percent of the total population. Although this scenario presents its own challenges, South Africa has an unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the potential of the youth population to strengthen economic growth and national development.

Programme Director

In order to invest wisely in teenage girls, more evidence is needed about their attitudes and behaviours, as well as the risk and protective

factors that shape the opportunities available to them.

The theme for this year's research therefore links perfectly to the theme for the commemorations and it is all about young people's perceptions and attitude towards reproductive health. Investing in teenage girls of South Africa therefore means that we have the responsibility to teach our girl children about their rights as young women, especially when it comes to reproductive health.

It is a sad reality that many girls in especially the rural areas of Limpopo, become sexually active and even become mothers at very young ages.

This, while there are so many options to choose from, to protect girls against unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and even HIV/AIDS. Many factors play a role in them

not choosing these options that are available from, example, local clinics. This includes societal values and morals; judgmental and negative attitudes of health care workers and financial constraints.

That being said, the goal for teenage girls should be abstinence. They need to know that a delay in becoming mothers heavily increases their chances of finishing their secondary education; accumulating skills that are relevant to the job market and starting an independent livelihood.

We therefore ask the young women gathered here today: Do you wish to one day be the CEO of your own company or a leader in society?

What about becoming doctors, world-class scientists, researchers or engineers?

What if among you here today, there is somebody who will one day find the cure for HIV or cancer? It is, unfortunately, not possible if you start engaging in activities that are meant for adults, too early!

Programme Director

We will continue down this road of empowering our teenage girls with knowledge to make the correct decisions that will impact on their lives as well as those of their communities. We are confident that our research on this topic will aid immensely in investing in teenage girls. It will also help them make informed decisions about marriage and childbearing and prepare them to become the next generation of parents.

In closure, as this month of women is drawing to a close, let us continue to take a stand against

women and child abuse as a matter of urgency. Let us invest in our children and especially in our teenage girls, by protecting them from sexual exploitation by Sugar Daddies or so-called "blessers". As women, we have the responsibility to ensure that our girl children make use of all the opportunities that exist for them in a non-racial and non-sexist environment.

Let us all join hands to build a caring society. Together.

I thank you!