

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MS. NKAKARENG RAKGOALE, AT THE EVENT OF THE YOUTH DIALOGUES, NTHAME PRIMARY SCHOOL, TUBATSE MUNICIPALITY, SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT.

6th August 2019

Programme Director;

**The Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune District Municipality,
Cllr. Stanley Ramaila;**

**The Mayor of Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality, Cllr.
Naume Tlakale Phala;**

District and Local Councillors;

Our esteemed traditional leadership;

**The Head of Department for Social Development, Ms.
Daphne Ramokgopa;**

Management and staff of the Department;

Representatives of our agencies NDA and SASSA

**Representatives of NPOs, Youth Formations and Faith
Based Organisations present here;**

Our guests of honour – the Youth of Limpopo;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Young people of Limpopo, I bid you a fond good morning!

On this day we have set aside to report back on the lengthy discussions you have had on issues affecting you as the youth, we first take a moment to remember our fallen hero. An icon of the struggle, Ntate Ike Maphoto, passed away at age 88 in Polokwane on Saturday 13th July. “Bra Ike”, as he was affectionately known, belonged to a generation of selfless freedom fighters who were prepared to pay the ultimate price in pursuit of the liberation of South Africa and its people.

The fact that we are free to gather here today and every other day, as we discuss issues that affect us; free from persecution and even death, is all thanks to Bra Ike Maphoto and his generation who laid down their lives for the struggle for freedom and equality. May his soul rest in peace.

Programme Director;

Last week we also celebrated the birthday of struggle icon and first democratically elected president of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. In his honour, we participated in 67 minutes of community service as he requested us to do.

This spirit of selflessly giving our time and energy towards the betterment of our communities and support of vulnerable citizens, should be something we engage in for more than just 67 minutes per year. Let us try and make every day a Mandela Day, as we focus on doing something positive and uplifting for those around us every day. Unlike the huge sacrifices the heroes and heroines of the struggle had made, we need only make small contributions and differences in the lives of the people around us, to create a better South Africa for all who live in it. This is all part and parcel of patriotism and the unique African spirit of Ubuntu

However, let us return to the business of the day.

Our theme for this year's past Youth Month celebrations and also for this engagement of today is:

“25 Years of Democracy: A celebration of Youth Activism”

The famous icons of the struggle as well as many who are lesser-known or remain nameless today - including the youth of the 16th June 1976 uprising - soldiered on against all odds to bring to us this freedom and democracy we celebrate today.

While the youth of 1976 fought for freedom and the creation of a democratic state, today's youth activism is directed towards successfully tackling the challenges of combating poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, crime, economic freedom and the development of themselves as well as the development of our country as a democratic state, among others.

The triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality persists and African women and the youth continue to suffer most from this challenge. These challenges are caused partially by poor or slow growth of small businesses, high levels of youth unemployment, high level of unskilled or inexperienced youth, gender based violence, alcohol and substance abuse and limited or lack of developmental opportunities. This has resulted in some youth being angry and very violent.

The situation seems to be direr with relation to youth who are based in rural or semi-rural areas and small towns. Socio-economic inequality in this country is still expressed through the medium of race. The country must also still battle with structural and institutional racism.

Although the youth face many challenges they have proven to be leaders and catalysts for social change.

This raises a need for the Department of Social Development together with its partners to mobilise youth about issues relating to patriotism, social cohesion, active citizenry and community service.

Indeed, the total population is constituted by people below the age of 35 years. Of these, about 42% are young people between the ages of 14 and 35. This makes South Africa a young nation. Such statistics demand that South African policy-making; national planning and programme implementation must take young people into consideration.

Programme Director;

We have, in the past 25 years of democracy, been successful in developing integrated and comprehensive legislation and policies aimed at protecting and promoting the rights and development of young people. However, the gravity of the challenges faced by the youth requires multipronged efforts that simultaneously promote the development of sustainable livelihoods.

There is a need for interventions such as life skills and entrepreneurship training. These programmes should be strengthened further to promote youth economic activity.

The effort must be made to retain young people in schools, where good education is offered and discourage them from dropping out before completing their secondary school education.

This is the reason why the Department realises the need to mobilize the youth; to create platforms for dialogue on issues that affect youth within communities and to transfer life skills and values such as patriotism, social cohesion, active citizenry and community service, which all translates into the age-old African tradition of Ubuntu.

Youth of Limpopo:

In President Cyril Ramaphosa's Youth Day Celebration speech in Polokwane on 16th June 2019, he outlined some of the opportunities that government is creating for the youth. They are, and I quote:

1. The National Youth Development Agency continues to provide interventions to support young entrepreneurs and has over the past five years disbursed development finance to more than six thousand (6,000) start-up youth entrepreneurs and helped create more than eighteen thousand (18,000) new jobs.

2. The NYDA has also trained almost four hundred thousand (400,000) young people on job preparedness and life skills. Around twenty five thousand (25,000) of these young people have now been placed in permanent jobs.

3. The Expanded Public Works and Community Works programmes continue to provide work opportunities and income relief to young people as they perform labour intensive activities like building roads, clearing alien vegetation and fighting fires.”

These are the success stories but we all realise that there are thousands more out there who are furthering their studies and are hoping to soon get into the job market. We salute those students who diligently complete their studies and tirelessly apply for positions that sometimes require of them to have experience, which they may or may not have. It is for this reason that government creates opportunities for internships and short term employment.

In closure, I was eager to hear the outcomes of your dialogues on the issues at hand. As a caring government that believes in giving a voice to its people, we will continue to create these platforms for engagement.

We acknowledge the generation gap that exists between the youth and their parents, grandparents and guardians, but as the youth, you need to consider their advice and their teachings, as they have been through the mill and know what to expect from life's ups and downs.

I also once again wish to remind the youth here today - and this may be preaching to the choir considering that you are here in numbers, listening and interacting with discipline – that substance abuse is a very big stumbling stone in your path to success. Don't get hooked on either illicit or licit substances. I am referring to not only alcohol and drugs, but even smoking and chewing tobacco products are costly, life-threatening and sometimes a pathway to more serious abuse of substances.

Focus on your goals and on becoming responsible and caring citizens of this country, who, in turn will create better lives for the people in your communities. You are the future of this country and a mammoth task rests on your shoulders to ensure that you take this country forward.

Thank you for your time and effort to create a caring society!
Have a safe journey back home.

I thank you!

Having stated all these statistics, suffice it to say that you must, at all costs, refrain from certain societal ills that continue to thrive in South Africa. Societal ills that will drag you down and place you in a dire situation that will create a huge gap between your current situation and what you dream to achieve in life.

However, nobody has made a solid, responsible and intellectual argument by burning, looting and breaking down infrastructure and resources. This destructive behaviour is counter-effective in bringing your point across and in achieving your ultimate goals. There are many ways in which to voice your concerns and to make people listen. The challenge put to you, is to find those

powerful ways of persuasion that does not include anger and senseless violence.

In closure, Programme Director;

I thank you!

Ke a leboga!

Ndo livhuwa!

Ndzi khensile!