

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, THE HON. MME MAPULA MOKABA-PHUKWANA AT THE PROVINCIAL LAUNCH OF “YOLO” (You Only Live Once), IN ALLDAYS SPORT GROUND, BLOUBERG MUNICIPALITY; ON THE 10TH NOVEMBER 2017.

**Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality, Ntate Mpe;
Local Mayor of Blouberg Municipality, Ntate Pheedi;
The Speaker of Blouberg Municipality; Mme Thamaga;
The Chief Whip; Ntate Choshi;
Head of Department, Mme Ramokgopa, and the DSD Staff;
Representatives of Schools Management Bodies of Schools
Present Here;
Learners from the Schools Present Here;
All Young People Whom are Our Main Target Audience Today;
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

I want greet you and say: “YOLO”

Program Director

Let me begin by borrowing from a world renowned Canadian poet, novelist and literary critic by the name of Margaret Atwood when she spoke of the youth as follows:

“When you’re young, you think everything you do is disposable. You move from now to now, crumpling time up in your hands, tossing it away. You’re your own speeding car. You think you can get rid of things, and people too—leave them behind. You don’t yet know about the habit they have, of coming back”

We meet here through this great initiative of “YOLO” – You only Live Once”, to engage mainly yourselves, the youth. You, the future and hope of this that nation we building to remain the greatest knowledge on the African continent and compete excellently the world over. We aim to impart to you knowledge and make a long lasting investment. You stand to determine the success and/or failure of all of us as a province and nation, since what is done today is for the future and that future must be presided over by yourselves.

In the same understanding, our great forefather whose legacy we enjoy and celebrate today as he world have been one hundred years old, President OR Kaizana Tambo commanded that:

“The children of any nation are its future. A country, a movement, a country that does not value its youth and children does not deserve its future”

We are preparing the future of this nation through you today, we take the future of this country very serious and thus we heed the call of our stalwarts. The situation we find ourselves in so far as HIV infections as a country is quite shocking and warrant for all of us especially the youth to take a stand and break the infection cycle now.

According to the twenty sixteen (2016) UNAIDS statistics on HIV infections among females between the age of fifteen (15) years and twenty four (24) years, as South Africa we are responsible for about twelve (12) infections per hour. That makes us the number country with infections of that portion of our society, the girls and young women. Imagine if we are to include the rest of the South African population in the statistic.

In terms of the infection path that we have mapped out by Scholars - *Dellar R, Tanser F, Abdool Karim Q and associates*, young women acquire HIV from older men. They fall prey to such due to their economic vulnerability in that they depend on those men for needs and material luxuries. The new phenomenon that is termed '**go BLESSER**'; which has introduced a wild predatory syndrome and acceleration of social ills of sexual nature, where the entire society fall victim in one way or the other. Eventually it happens that the young women infect partners or males of their age, and as a result the numbers of infections grow in an unprecedented manner.

We ought to confront these kind of ills in our communities and advance our means to fight the endemic. I am calling upon you, the youth to preserve and safeguard the future – you are the future. Take the fight back to the social ills and stop the spread of this deadly virus that is making a meal out of the future of our country, eating away what is supposed to be our greatest investment as a nation.

Program Director

With YOLO we aim at empowering you the youth and therefore address the structural drivers of HIV in goal four of the Provincial Strategic Plan on HIV, TB and STIs 2017 – 2022. As a Province we have therefore embarked on popularising the social and behaviour change programme to reach young people from all corners.

We want to enhance and develop social skills among young people, with a view to decrease risky sexual behaviours that lead to HIV infections and unwanted pregnancies. Through this programme we seek to create an enabling environment in which young people can safely voice their

issues (through youth dialogues) and where positive values related to the sexuality of young people can emerge. The programme has twelve (12) sessions, and youth who have completed these sessions graduate and become change agents through their positive life.

The specific objectives of the programme are to:

- Build young people's resilience, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficiency.
- Build young people's knowledge, attitude and skills to voluntarily assume positive practices and sustain positive behaviour outcomes.
- Invest positive values in young people to become change agents within their communities.
- Instil active citizenry among the young people.
- Minimise new HIV infections among the youth.

Program Director

The districts of Mopani and here in Capricorn still remain districts with highest prevalence of HIV hence, with the focus for impact strategy; the Department initiated the YOLO programme in these two Districts

The programme has already reached about four thousand two hundred and five (4 205) young people and about two thousand and five (2005) of them have already completed the 12 sessions. We thus pin our hope on them as soldiers of the fight against the spread of the endemic, and to help make their peer appreciate that *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE!*

Waterberg, Sekhukhune and Vhembe have been capacitated to also implement this programme. In that regard we plan to reach every possible young person across the length and breadth of the Limpopo province.

Program Director

As I conclude I would like to highlight why we think Social and Behavioral Change is one of our strategies and tactics against this enemy of HIV infections.

Research shows that the only hope for the reversal of the HIV epidemic lies in the delivery of effective behaviour change strategies, regardless of the difficulty of attempting to change human behaviour.

For Biomedical HIV prevention to succeed, they would still need to be administered in the context of positive and informed human behaviour. Correct solutions that address symptoms and leave the cause of illness will surely remain short-legged and thus will not travel to cover the miles of this heavy journey in the fight against HIV/AIDS. However, we must acknowledge that widespread behaviour change is often difficult to achieve because human behaviour is complex.

Let us become the change that we all want to see in these communities of ours. Youth, you are commanded to take the lead. STOP THE SPREAD NOW! YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE!

Kea leboga! I thank you!