

Welcome address at the Sports Heroes Walk Against HIV and AIDS

17 November 2008

Welcome address by Clr. Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, MMC: Community Development, at the Sports Heroes Walk Against HIV and AIDS, Soweto.

The Executive Mayor
MMCs present here
Fellow Councillors present here
City Manager
MDs, of the MOEs of the City
Executive Directors
Members of the Media,
Members of the LOC
Participants
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen
The community at large

It is with great pleasure that I stand here to welcome you to his memorable event.

Programme Director, I am sure you will agree with me that, AIDS today claims more lives than the sum total of all wars, famines and floods, and the ravages of such deadly diseases as malaria. It has a devastating effect on families and communities, overwhelming and depleting health care services, and robbing schools of both students and teachers.

Business continues to suffer losses of personnel, productivity and profits, economic growth is being undermined and scarce developmental resources have to be diverted to deal with the consequences of the pandemic.

HIV/AIDS is having a devastating impact on families, communities, societies and economies. Decades have been chopped from life expectancy and young child mortality is expected to more than double in the most severely affected countries of Africa. AIDS is clearly a disaster, effectively wiping out the developmental gains of the past decades and sabotaging the future.

Programme Director, however, I want to add, that our government has moved significantly with initiatives to combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS. I also want to be amongst those who concede that much more remains to be done. As government we will continue to tackle this task with resolve and dedication.

The experiences in a number of countries has taught us that HIV infection can be prevented through investing in information and life skills development for young people. Promoting abstinence, safe sex and the use of condoms and ensuring the early treatment of sexually transmitted diseases are some of the steps needed. Ensuring that people especially the young, have access to voluntary and confidential HIV counseling and testing services and introducing measures to reduce mother-to-child transmission. Equally, we have to recognize the importance of addressing the stigmatization and discrimination, and provide safe and supportive environments within our communities for people affected by HIV/AIDS.

I wish to commend you for this one small contribution to the great combined effort that is required, and thank you for your involvement in this struggle. Let us combine our efforts to ensure a future for our children and generations to come.

I welcome you all and thank you.