

**ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE
WATERBERG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY DURING
THE CANDLE LIGHT DAY CEREMONY 14, JUNE
2009 AT TSHAMAHANSI**

Programme Director,

**Honourable MEC for Health and Social development (in
absentia),**

The Mayor of Mogalakwena Local Municipality,

Honourable Speakers and councillors,

Our Traditional leaders,

Senior Managers of both government and municipalities,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

GOOD DAY, THOBELA, AVUXENI

Programme Director, it is of great pleasure to us as the political leadership of the Waterberg District Municipality to be part of this historic event. We are almost seven weeks from the General Elections, where the African National Congress (ANC) was once again voted to lead the government of South Africa. We also want to take this opportunity to thank all the voters who overwhelmingly voted because it clearly demonstrated that our democracy is indeed maturing day by day.

Programme Director, we gathered here today to join the nation in praying for our loved ones who are infected with HIV and AIDS and also who lost their lives as a result of this pandemic.

The Waterberg District Municipality is a vast rural area with scattered communities consisting of a number of villages with five boarder control posts and the N1 which passes through four of local municipalities. As a result of this, there is high transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and other associated problems. Due to the that boarder other provinces and Botswana, a stream of different people with different cultures are visiting our district to be serviced in one kind or the other. This causes the transmission of HIV and AIDS to move at a higher speed.

The international community came with an idea of praying for HIV positive and AIDS members in 1983. The candlelight memorial commemoration is twenty five years old and is comparable to young and adults who are rational.

From that year it is now been commemorated on the selected week and month which is the third Sunday of May annually.

The whole idea was to bring together individuals, organizations sectors and communities to honuor the lives of those who lost their lives due to AIDS related illness. So that we give support to people living with HIV, and raise social consciousness about HIV and AIDS.

This event also provides opportunities for the strengthening of leadership, policy advocacy, partnerships and social mobilization in response to HIV and AIDS.

People to hold candle of hope when dealing with HIV and AIDS issues.

The 2009 theme for the International Candlelight Memorial Campaign is **“Together, We Are the Solution”**.

The Waterberg District has been categorised as the number one Antenatal Sero HIV prevalence as compared to other four districts in our province. Programme Director, this clearly means together we must hold hands in ensuring that we fight against this killer disease.

Programme Director three weeks ago, this Candlelight Memorial Commemoration is a back up of the Provincial one held at Sekhukhune District on the 24th May 2009. Following the theme for this year, this indicates the importance of working together as both government and civil society to ensure the best possible delivery of services to all.

As Waterberg District together with the Provincial and National Department of Health, we have 54 clinics, 34 mobile clinics, 9 hospitals, 21 funded Non profit organizations and 6 unfunded NGO`s including 6 Nonmedical services that are rendering free health services to our communities. All the 9 hospitals together with 4 primary health facilities, are accredited for comprehensive treatment care and support.

One Non profit organization has by the Department of health and social development for counsellor programme of which 114 counsellors are trained and placed in clinics and hospitals for decent service delivery. There is a one NGO which is also contracted by government to high transmission areas for the distribution of condoms. Home community based carers are also trained and rendering the care to people living with HIV/AIDS at their homes.

Programme Director, as leaders and community members let us encourage our people living with HIV/AIDS to join organised structures so as to receive the necessary care and treatment they deserve.

The main reason why we gathered here with all our stakeholders, is also to raise awareness to our people and further encourage them to utilize the government facilities at their disposal so that they can have access to prevention .

The National target is to reduce HIV/AIDS infection by 50% in 2011 and therefore in an endeavor to reach that target, we have been testing and counseling as the entry point to prevention. Other programmes are offered to pregnant women, that is prevention of mother to child transmission so that positive mother do not infect the unborn child during and after delivery. It is also the responsibility of our Mayors in different municipalities to ensure that sufficient budget is put aside for HIV/AIDS awareness programmes.

Programme Director, encourage sectors like Women in partnership against HIV/AIDS, Men in partnership against HIV/AIDS, House of the Traditional Leaders, Business Sectors, Traditional Healers, Non Government Organizations and all Faith based organization to come out and conduct awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS and other STI related diseases. Luckily enough I met the Waterberg District House of Traditional Leaders on Friday and these was one of the gospel I was preaching to them. I also have a programme of meeting all other organized structures in the district where I hope issues of HIV/ AIDS will be constantly appearing on our topics.

Ladies and gentlemen we are to strengthen and sustain functional multi-sectoral partnerships for them to ensure a comprehensive, collaboration and coordinated response to HIV and AIDS.

Together We Are a Solution in deed, as the Waterbergers we need to create an enabling environment for communities to engage themselves in a dialogue and also to consult where there is a need in matters related to HIV and AIDS. As leaders in government we always make sure that we sing the ABC tune (Abstain, Be faithful and Condomise). We have to go back to our culture of respect, caring, support and inclusiveness in order to give voice to those who are infected and or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Programme Director, the abuse of alcohol and drugs by youth contribute to the high transmission of this epidemic. We therefore appeal to our youth during these youth month to stay away from the abuse of these substances.

In conclusion Programme Director, together with the department of Health and Social Development, Local Mayors and other stakeholders, we have to make sure that the Local and District AIDS Councils are established and up and functional before the end of July 2009. As the district we have been dragging our feet in ensuring that these important structures are established and now is the time to respond to the legislative requirements. With these structures municipalities will have it easy in rolling out programmes related to HIV/AIDS.

“Ditau tsa hloka seboka di shitwa ke nare e hlotsa”, ‘Together we can do more in eliminating these killer disease.

“Most successful men have not achieved their distinction by having some new talent or opportunities presented to them. They have developed the opportunity that was at hand”. Bruce Barton

Thank You, Ke a Leboga, Inkomo