

**SPEECH BY GREATER SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT  
(GSDM) EXECUTIVE MAYOR CLLR MOGOBO DAVID  
MAGABE AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SEKHUKHUNE  
AIDS COUNCIL**

**DATE: 02 FEBRUARY 2010**

**VENUE: MUNICIPAL HALL, MARBLE HALL**

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The Mayor of Ephraim Mogale Municipality  
The Speaker  
Councillors  
Representatives from the Department of Health  
Municipal Officials  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Day,

Today marks a very important milestone in the fight against HIV and Aids in Sekhukhune.

The Sekhukhune Aids Council, which is being launched here, is a microcosm of the South African National Aids Council (SANAC).

Like SANAC, the Sekhukhune Aids Council is a body comprising government and private sector organisations and will carry out the task of overseeing and advising government on HIV and Aids issues.

This means the District will now be strengthened in fighting this scourge.

The objectives of the District structure are not different from SANAC's and they are to:

- Advise government on HIV, AIDS and sexually-transmitted infections (STI) policy and strategy;
- Create and strengthen partnerships for an expanded national response to HIV and Aids in the country;

- Oversee continual monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the National Strategic Plan (NSP 2007-2011) on HIV, Aids and STIs;
- Receive and disseminate reports on all sectoral interventions to HIV and Aids and consider challenges.

The South African government has put in place various strategies that aim to comprehensively deal with HIV and Aids, Tuberculosis and STIs.

A structure like SANAC has been able to harness unity in confronting HIV and Aids, and the same will apply to the Sekhukhune Aids Council.

Government has, over the years, also been dedicating a lot of resources to prevention, treatment and care.

In showing the ANC-led government's commitment, President Jacob Zuma recently announced that as from April this year, a number measures will be implemented in intensifying the fight against HIV-Aids.

These measures include, first and foremost, encouraging and mobilising each and every South African to get tested for HIV and know their status.

This is key in taking the responsibility about HIV and Aids to the individual, because that is where the spread of this disease start.

Other measures announced by President Zuma are that:

- All children under one year of age will get treatment if they test positive. Initiating treatment will therefore not be determined by the level of CD cells. This decision will contribute significantly towards the reduction of infant mortality over time.
- All patients with both TB and HIV will get treatment with anti-retrovirals (ARVs) if their CD4 count is 350 or less. At

present treatment is available when the CD4 count is less than 200.

- TB and HIV/Aids will now be treated under one roof. This policy change will address early reported deaths arising from undetected TB infection among those who are infected with HIV.

This step has been taken, particularly on learning that approximately 1% of our population has TB and that the co-infection between TB and HIV is 73%.

All pregnant HIV positive women with a CD4 count of 350 or with symptoms regardless of CD4 count will have access to treatment. At present HIV positive pregnant women are eligible for treatment if their CD4 count is less than 200.

All other pregnant women not falling into this category, but who are HIV positive, will be put on treatment at fourteen weeks of pregnancy to protect the baby. In the past this was only started during the last term of pregnancy.

In order to meet the need for testing and treatment, we will work to ensure that all the health institutions in the country are ready to receive and assist patients and not just a few accredited ARV centres.

Any citizen should be able to move into any health centre and ask for counselling, testing and even treatment if needed.

On this note I would like to encourage all the community members, stakeholders and organisations to work with this council.

Let us all working towards having an HIV-free Sekhukhune District.

All of us must say: "I am responsible. We are responsible. South Africa is responsible. Sekhukhune is responsible."

Thank you.