

**Minister of Public Works
Ms S Sigcau
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**Launch of the HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign
Qunu**

Master of Ceremonies, Ms Lydia Bici
Dr Nelson Mandela
Dr Lucky Mazibuko
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

On October 9, on the Fourth Anniversary of the Partnership Against AIDS, government reaffirmed its commitment to intensifying its comprehensive programme to fight HIV/AIDS in partnership with all sectors of society.

On that day, Cabinet received a report on what has been done since 17 April 2002 when government launched the Campaign of Hope, calling on all sectors of society to join hands in the campaign to prevent HIV infection and to deal with its consequences.

Since there is no known cure for AIDS, progress in prevention is critical.

A new phase of the awareness campaign, with R98 million of government funding, was launched in September, with partners such as loveLife.

This year, 350 million condoms will be supplied free including through such non-traditional outlets as clubs, shebeens and spaza shops.

The South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative is busy with laboratory testing of candidate vaccines and clinical trials could start in late 2003.

Government is also continuing with its Prevention of Mother- to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) and has dispensed Nevirapine to 10 043 women and 6 947 babies. Training and rollout on this programme is continuing in all provinces.

Government decided in April 2002 to provide a comprehensive package of support for survivors of sexual assault and is concerned about the quality of life of those infected with HIV/AIDS. We also want to believe that protecting and strengthening the immune system helps ward off infections. Government's poverty alleviation programme and nutritional interventions help fight HIV/AIDS. Government also encourages investigations into complementary treatments for boosting the immune system. A protocol for research into such treatments has been drafted for submission to the Medicines Control Council.

Yet the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa is one of the fastest growing epidemics in the world and this constitutes one of the most formidable challenges to development and social progress. It is estimated that by the year 2005, approximately 6 million South Africans will be infected with HIV/AIDS.

The worst effects of this pandemic are visited on our impoverished communities. Essentially the fight of the third millennium is on two major fronts, namely against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and underdevelopment and poverty.

AIDS in the construction industry

Research conducted by various construction industry stakeholders and the Department indicates that the construction industry has the third highest incidence rate of HIV/AIDS per economic sector in South Africa, with very little being done to address the problem in this particular sector. Failure to address the situation will impact negatively on the South African economy especially in relation to increases in absenteeism, accidents, skills shortages of up to 35%, cost of retraining and decreased levels of productivity.

AIDS awareness campaign on DPW construction projects

It is in this light that the Department has initiated a project aimed at creating awareness about the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the construction industry. As leaders of this industry, we are required to lead by example and to champion and promote best practices that would enhance growth and development of the industry. The core of the HIV/AIDS awareness strategy hinges on construction companies and employers making a conscious effort to effectively address this pandemic within the sector. The implementation of this strategy will become mandatory for all contractors tendering for DPW contracts after completion of the pilot projects. All contractors/project coordinators will be briefed on the framework for the HIV/Aids campaign and their responsibilities prior to the implementation of the pilot projects.

The four pilot projects that we have identified are:

- The construction of the Nelson Mandela Museum in Qunu;
- The construction of the Social Services Guguletu District Office in Cape Town;
- A Community Based Public Works Programme project in Kwa-Zulu Natal;
- The labour Intensive Rural Roads Maintenance Programme in the Northern Province

These projects have been selected because of:

- The project's location (pilot projects must be geographically distributed)
- Cooperation with departmental officials and the contractor/consultant project coordinator
- The timing of construction
- The labour intensity
- The duration of the project for monitoring and evaluation purposes
- The value of the project.

The overall goal of the strategy is to improve health and safety in the construction industry through the implementation of HIV/Aids awareness campaigns on DPW projects.

The campaign is aimed at addressing, together with partners in the construction industry, issues such as HIV/Aids training/prevention programmes, encouragement of voluntary HIV/Aids and STD testing, the creation of a non-discriminatory working environment, the establishment of counselling and referral systems for support and care and the promotion of respect for the rights and obligations of individuals as well as employer responsibility - specifically within the construction industry.

The video we have watched will contribute to these objectives, as will the conducting of HIV/Aids training and talks, the distribution of DPW HIV/Aids awareness posters and brochures and the installation and maintenance of condom dispensers on all construction sites.

Amendments to Procurement

The Department's procurement process will be amended to ensure enforcement of the HIV/Aids awareness campaign on DPW projects.

The amendments to the procurement process will be phased into all DPW tender documentation on completion of the pilot projects.

In order to ensure that the DPW strategy is adhered to, our project managers will have to verify conformance to the strategy by means of a standard checklist during each construction progress inspection, which will be submitted to the Construction Industry Development Programme Directorate for review. In addition to this, a random survey will be performed by the Construction Industry Development Programme Directorate (CIDP) on a sample of the contracts which are held by the Department. Once the strategy is rolled-out to the entire construction industry, random monitoring will be carried out by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB). Given the high levels of activity and the coordination of much of the issues of minimum standards and best practice around the Register of Contractors we are considering to bring definable and verifiable items into the Register.

Such an audit will quickly identify the contractors not adhering to the Department's mandatory requirements for HIV/Aids awareness in DPW projects. Such contractors will be penalised accordingly. These penalties will be clearly stipulated in the amended contract documentation.

The first President of our nascent democracy was none other than our father, leader and role model for our youth, Rolihlahla, Nelson Mandela. Madiba, you are the embodiment of the resilience and sacrifices of our people for freedom. Indeed at the darkest hour in the history of our country, you emerged as the volunteer in chief and confronted the might of apartheid.

Your spirit is still vibrant and young. Once more you have answered the call of your organisation, the ANC, to volunteer for reconstruction and development. In the true traditions of volunteers you are leading in the frontline of the battle against our new enemy, HIV/AIDS and poverty. Your principled steadfastness is a source of inspiration for our people. There is no cause for pessimism and we are confident that the victors of apartheid will prevail.

The significance of the launch of the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign for the construction industry of South Africa at your retirement home is to underscore the degree of commitment required for victory. Only a comprehensive response can defeat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Underscoring the commitment of his government in the HIV/AIDS fight, President Mbeki declared in his February State of the Nation address, " With regard to AIDS in particular, our focus remains: a massive prevention campaign directed at ensuring that the high rates of awareness translate into a change in lifestyles; care for the affected and infected; treatment of all diseases including those associated with AIDS; and research into a vaccine - a programme described by the head of UNAIDS, Dr Peter Piot, as the largest and most comprehensive in Africa and one of the largest in the world; a programme, he says, with very high levels of government investment, which is starting to show results.

"Proceeding from the accepted premise that there is no cure for AIDS, we are convinced that, besides the individual and collective responsibility for us to take care of our own lives, protection and enhancement of the immune system is a critical intervention in both the prevention and management of AIDS. By implication, therefore, poverty reduction and appropriate nutrition constitute an important front in this campaign. At the same time, continuing work will be done to monitor the efficacy of anti-retroviral interventions against mother-to-child transmission in the sites already operational and any new ones that may be decided upon."

Government has taken an in-principle decision to rollout anti-retroviral interventions at all public hospitals. During the debate on the Revision of Revenue Bill the Minister of Finance, Mr Trevor Manuel said, " Over the medium term expenditure framework period(MTEF), additional allocations totaling R20,5 billion are proposed for provinces, mainly in response to the rapid take-up of the child support grant and to reinforce both human and physical capacity in the health system to address the impact of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria.

"This budget contains significant measures to strengthen the national HIV/AIDS programme. In addition to an estimated R4billion currently spent by provincial health departments on AIDS related illnesses, funding for prevention programmes in schools and communities, hospital treatment and community care programmes will amount to R1,0 billion next year, rising to R1,8 billion in 2004/05. This includes a progressive roll-out of a programme to prevent mother-to-child transmission at the conclusion of the current trials."

These words clearly indicates to us how the DPW campaign to address AIDS in the construction industry forms part of government's effort to deal with this scourge. Underlining our initiative as Public Works, I will unveil this logo and slogan under which the campaign will run in the construction industry

It is my pleasure also to hand to Mr Ian Decker, as Managing Director of Masakhane Building Projects, the contractor on site, a copy of the video we watched before. I want to thank him for recognising the importance of this awareness campaign and for agreeing to the launch of the campaign from this project.

As Deputy President Zuma said on 9 October 2002:

"Government is intensifying efforts to assist families affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, through the Departments of Health, Social Development and Education. This includes foster-care grants, assistance to child-headed households and food parcels." He also indicated that provinces would expand their services according to their differing capacities.

I am grateful to include among the respective sectors that the Deputy President named (from business, labour, women, youth, traditional healers, transport, entertainment, scientific community, media and others) also as from today the construction industry - to continue playing a role to strengthen our country's response to this epidemic.

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