

SPEECH NOTES FOR MEC NOMAGUGU SIMELANE DURING THE LAUNCH OF
THE "STOP TB AND OTHER HEALTH CONDITIONS IN CHILDREN" CAMPAIGN
20TH MARCH 2025, TSHELEJUBA AREA, PHONGOLO, ZULULAND DISTRICT

- Sanibonani!

INTRODUCTION:

- Good morning to the people of Tshelejuba...
- It's a pleasure to be here today as we launch the "Stop TB" campaign.
- This is a vital initiative for the health of our young people, and for the well-being of our entire community.

TOMORROW IS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: WHY THIS DAY IS IMPORTANT

- But before I proceed, please allow me to reflect on Human Rights Day, which is being commemorated tomorrow.
- This is a day of great significance to all of us as South Africans.
- It is observed to honour the Sharpeville Massacre, which occurred on 21st March 1960.
- On that day, around 5,000 black South Africans gathered outside a police station in Sharpeville, a township in the Vaal Triangle (in the province of Gauteng), to protest against the pass laws that were being enforced by the apartheid government.
- These laws required black South Africans to carry passbooks and obtain permission to live or work in certain areas, among other restrictions.
- The protest was peaceful, but the South African police opened fire on the crowd, killing 69 people and injuring 180 others.
- The majority of those killed were shot in the back as they attempted to run away.
- This event marked a turning point in the struggle against Apartheid, leading to increased resistance and global condemnation of the regime.
- Human Rights Day is now a public holiday in South Africa to remind citizens of the importance of human rights, democracy, and the sacrifices made during the struggle for freedom and equality.
- It's a day to reflect on the country's progress in building a democratic society where human rights are protected for all.

WHY THIS DAY IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU AND I, AS FAR AS OUR HEALTH IS CONCERNED:

- This day is a reminder of the struggles and sacrifices that were made by our ancestors to ensure that each and every one of us enjoys the basic human rights we now have — the right to education, the right to live freely, and most importantly, the right to good health.
- As we remember the importance of these rights, it is crucial that we understand that health is not just a privilege but a fundamental right.
- Just as we have the right to access education and freedom, we also have the right to live healthy lives.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY:

- But having this right means that we must take responsibility for our own health.
- It is not enough to simply hope that we will stay healthy. We must actively care for our health by preventing diseases like HIV/AIDS, TB, and other illnesses that are impacting so many lives in our communities.
- We have the right to know our disease status, which means it's so important to get tested regularly — whether it's for HIV, TB, or even high blood pressure or diabetes, which are some of the leading diseases that affect many people.
- Early detection of diseases can save lives and keep us healthy.
- Taking your medication properly and following the treatment plans prescribed by your doctors is also an essential part of this.

EXPLAINING TB IN SIMPLE TERMS:

Another important topic that we need to talk about today, which is affecting the lives of too many young and old people in our communities is tuberculosis (TB).

What is TB?

TB is a disease that is caused by tiny germs that mainly attack your lungs.
These germs can also affect other parts of the body, like your kidneys or bones.
TB makes you feel sick, tired, and causes a persistent cough, which can last for weeks.
How does TB spread?

TB spreads through the air.

When someone with TB coughs, sneezes, or talks, tiny droplets filled with TB germs are released into the air.

If you breathe in those droplets, you can catch TB.

That's why people with TB need to cover their mouth when they cough or sneeze and go to a doctor to get treated.

How can TB be prevented?

1. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, to prevent the spread of germs.
2. Get tested: If you have a cough that lasts more than two weeks, or if you're feeling weak or tired, go to the clinic and get tested for TB.
3. Complete your treatment: If diagnosed with TB, follow the doctor's instructions and take all your medicine. Skipping your treatment can make the disease worse.
4. Ventilate your home: Open your windows and let fresh air in. This reduces the spread of TB germs.
5. Vaccination: The BCG vaccine helps protect babies and young children from the severe forms of TB. Therefore, it is important to follow the immunisation schedule, as outlined in the "Road to Health" Chart.

THE IMPACT OF TB IN OUR SOCIETY:

- Despite being preventable and treatable, TB is still one of the deadliest diseases in KZN, South Africa, and in many parts of the world.
- In 2023, over 56,000 people died from TB in South Africa, with more than 31,000 of those deaths occurring among people living with HIV.

THE IMPACT OF TB ON CHILDREN:

- TB and HIV can weaken the immune system, leaving children vulnerable to other illnesses, stunted growth, and delays in their ability to think and learn.
- Poor nutrition can make things worse, affecting physical and brain development.
- Mental health issues like anxiety or depression can also stop children from focusing in school.
- Early intervention is critical to help children grow and succeed in life.

JUST TO RECAP:

- If you have a persistent cough, feel tired or weak, or are losing weight, don't wait!
- Go to the clinic, get tested, and if you're diagnosed with TB, stick to your treatment plan.
- Early treatment and sticking to your medication is key.

UNDERSTANDING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDS); UNPACKING THE DANGER OF STIGMA; BENEFITS OF GETTING TESTED, AND ADHERING TO MEDICATION:

- Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), cancer, and heart disease are illnesses that are not passed from one person to another.
- Yizifo ezingathelelani!
- These diseases can be managed effectively, through early detection and consistent treatment.
- However, they require ongoing care and management, often through chronic medication.
- Chronic conditions are common in many adults, especially as people age, and they should not be seen as a source of shame.
- These diseases are part of life, and with proper care, people can live fulfilling lives.

DON'T FEEL EMBARRASSED ABOUT HEALTH CONDITIONS:

- It is important that we as a society stop the stigma associated with chronic diseases.
- Everyone deserves to receive care and live a healthy life, regardless of the condition they may be living with.
- Chronic illness is not a reflection of personal failure. It is simply part of the reality for many people.
- There's no shame in needing regular medication or support to manage your health.
- People suffering from chronic conditions should feel empowered, not embarrassed, to talk about their condition and seek help when needed.
- Your health is important, and taking care of it is an act of self-love, and self-respect.

GET TESTED AND KNOW YOUR HEALTH STATUS:

- Testing is the key to understanding your health. Many non-communicable diseases develop silently, without obvious symptoms. Therefore, the only way to know your status and catch a condition early is through regular testing.
- Don't wait for the symptoms to get worse—get tested regularly for conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, and other NCDs. Early detection makes a huge difference in managing these diseases and improving quality of life.

- The healthcare system is there for you. It is never too late to check your health status, and everyone has the right to access medical services.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING MEDICATION AS PRESCRIBED:

- Once you have been diagnosed with an NCD and prescribed medication, it is important to follow the treatment plan carefully. Take your medication exactly as prescribed by your doctor to ensure effective management of your condition.
- Skipping doses or stopping medication can worsen the condition and lead to serious complications.
- Chronic medications are not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength because they represent a commitment to living a healthy life and taking care of yourself.

ENCOURAGING A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE:

- In addition to taking your medication as prescribed, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is essential. This includes eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, managing stress, and avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol.
- People with chronic conditions can still lead active, fulfilling lives when they take care of their health and work closely with healthcare providers to manage their conditions.

CONCLUSION:

- Let's promise to work together to end TB.
- Together, we can build a healthier, brighter future for everyone.
- Ngiyabonga, and let's keep moving towards a future that is free from TB, HIV and AIDS, and Non-Communicable Diseases!

Thank you very much!

ENDS