

Speaking Notes by the Deputy Minister of Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo during illegal abortion awareness campaign – Mthata, Eastern Cape,

Thursday, 12 May 2022

Thank You Programme Director

Greetings to my health colleagues, MEC Meth

Executive Mayor

Representatives from Development AND Support Partners

Leaders of Civil Society present

Youth and Women Organizations

Officials from National and Provincial Health Departments

Distinguished Guests

Members of the media present

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning - Molweni

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for inviting me to be part of this moving train of promoting a long and healthy lifestyle amongst our people, especially the most vulnerable people.

This event coincide with the International Nurses Day, a global celebration that acknowledges and celebrates the commitment and bravery of nurses around the world.

This is an important day to ensure that the invaluable contributions of nurses, who constitute a large percentage of our health workforce, are

recognised. Thus, let's join the rest of the country and the global community to commemorate this day to acknowledge the sacrifices made by our nurses and other healthcare workers under difficult conditions to care for the sick and save our lives.

In most cases, the nurses are the first people to welcome on earth and also the last people to see us before we say goodbye. Nurses are often the only health professionals accessible to many people in their lifetime because they are found in every layer of healthcare, unlike medical specialists.

Anyway, today we are here to continue with the nationwide campaign to promote access to and benefits of sexual reproductive health together with the dangers of illegal and unsafe termination of pregnancies. It pains us as the government leaders to see our people, women in majority leaving safe and free health services for whatever reason, but go and spend the last money they don't have to pay someone to put their lives at risk.

There is no justification for women correct unplanned pregnancy with illegal and unsafe aborting because we all make mistakes, and illegal abortion is not an answer. We have got free contraceptives accessible in all health facilities, clinics and hospitals, we even introduced Youth Friendly Zones to ensure that girls and young women feel free to discuss sexual reproductive health issues without being judged by the elders.

The government has designated about 500 health facilities to provide safe and free termination of pregnancy by qualified healthcare workers in line with Choice On Termination Of Pregnancy Act No 92 Of 1996, and so far

we have 346 public health facilities providing safe termination of pregnancy services, and out of this number, 46 are found in this province of the Eastern Cape.

The rest of the number spreads across the country, 16 of them in Free State, 25 in Gauteng, 56 in KZN, 54 in Limpopo, 27 in Mpumalanga, 6 in the Northern Cape, 26 in the North West and finally 90 in the Western Cape. We can avoid preventable deaths if we use these services, or condoms and other forms of contraceptives.

It is through these interventions that we believe we can be able to reduce the statistics of child pregnancy, HIV infections and other STIs which negatively affect the future of our young people, socially and educationally because some of young women who fall pregnant while at primary and high school, don't have time to return to complete their studies on time because they have to double as teenage mothers and learners at the same time.

It is unfortunate that their male counterparts are not affected by this unplanned and disruptive breaks. The Department of Health working closely with various partners organisations including civil society has embarked on the campaign to educate the public, especially young women and girls about the dangers of illegal termination of pregnancy.

It is estimated that 5 million women are hospitalised globally each year for treatment of unsafe abortion related complications such as heavy bleeding (haemorrhage) and sepsis, and unsafe abortion related deaths leave 220.000 children motherless.

The big question is, how many of these are in our country, how many of these are in the EC. Don't be part of these statistics. Unsafe abortions can lead to a wide range of health risks that can affect the well-being of a woman.

As the department of health we have never stopped the provision of sexual and reproductive health services even during the hard lockdown period of COVID-19. Although it is the collective responsibility of all sectors of the community to condemn and expose places of illegal abortions, and never allow them to advertise on your street poles and perimeter walls.

For those who are subjected to unfriendly attitude or hostile reception at our health facilities, please feel free to kindly give us feedback through our Bwise platform so that we can intervene and improve access to health services

South Africa remains committed to providing comprehensive sexual and reproduction health services with an equitable and rights based approach. The department has developed national integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights policy 2019, national adolescent and youth policy 2017 and related guidelines including the national clinical guideline for implementation of termination of pregnancy.

The national clinical guideline for implementation of termination of pregnancy is being introduced with the purpose of standardizing and expanding service delivery in re-affirming all citizens' right to a comprehensive reproduction health care, as per the constitution, adolescent and young people is a group with high numbers of unplanned

and unwanted pregnancies and hence are the ones who mostly request the service in high numbers.

Currently, South Africa is having about 346 public health facilities providing safe termination of pregnancy services, and out of this number, 46 are found in this province of the Eastern Cape, 16 in Free State, 25 in Gauteng, 56 in KZN, 54 in Limpopo, 27 in Mpumalanga, 6 in the Northern Cape, 26 in the North West and finally 90 in the Western Cape.

Bantwana bami yekani ukusebenzisa lababantu, abathi bango gqira bengebona, bayanibulala

Apha e, eastern cape sinawo amaziko empilo eningaya kuwo, ningabhatali nesenti:

Okubalulekileyo kwinto zonke masisebenzise ucwangciso ukuzikhusela ekukhulelweni okukukhuselekileyo

Ndiyabulela