

**SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF ADM, ALDERMAN S. SOMYO
DURING THE "TAXI BRANDING" LAUNCH BY TB FREE AT SISA
DUKASHE STADIUM ON FRIDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2007**

All protocols observed.

It is my honour and privilege for me to welcome you to this "Taxi Branding" ceremony.

The high rate of the prevalence of TB and its relationship to HIV/AIDS is a crisis confronting both our province in general and our district in particular. Fueling the crisis even further is reports that our cure rates are relatively low.

Let us declare a war against TB, be it Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) or Extreme Drug Resistant TB (XDR-TB).

It is not the first time that we have faced a crisis in our district. In all the crises that we have been confronted with, the single lesson that we have learnt in fighting any crisis or war is that there are three critical principles that should inform our approach.

The first principle is **UNITY**. We need to mobilize our people both affected and infected into this war against TB.

We may be having certain things that make the levels of our unity low at the present moment. Whatever those may be, my well considered view is that, for the sake of defeating TB and for the sake of our lives, we need to put all those things aside and confront this scourge with high levels of collectivity.

It is only our ability to unite that will determine the time at which we will have effective control on the disease

An article that appeared in the Daily Dispatch of 24 August 2007 on the same subject confirms the importance of unity, when it reads, "Mobilising community support is absolutely crucial in tackling a disease that people fear, that is highly infectious when left untreated and that is only cured if the patient shows exceptional staying power."

The second principle that should guide our struggle against TB is **DISCIPLINE**. Discipline is about proper behaviour.

One of the behaviours that we should avoid is to **stigmatise** those who are affected and infected by this disease. Stigmatising a person suffering from any disease, in particular TB, is like adding salt to injury and that will never help our fight against this disease.

Of course it is important that we take all precautionary measures to ensure that we counter the infectious nature of the disease. However, let us resist the temptation to stigmatise. Let us create communities characterized by high levels of support so that both the affected and infected can cope.

The third principle that is crucial in the struggle against TB is **ORGANISATION**.

All our organizations, be they political, cultural, social etc. should place the issue of TB very high on their agendas.

According to Dr Lindiwe Mvusi, head of the National TB Control Programme, "TB is a critical public health problem, but it is also a social problem."

On the side of government, strengthening of the health systems, which is essential for getting the epidemic under control, falls within this principle. We are charged with a responsibility to increase our cure rate from 31 per cent to 85 per cent and through improved and highly organized health systems we will be able to achieve that provincial target.

In conclusion, it is our united, disciplined and organized action that will determine our success against the scourge of TB.