

REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH, DR SIBONGISENI

These are major challenges not only for the health and education sectors but for the future prospects of the country as a whole. They further undermine the agency of young people and compromise their well-being and socio-economic growth.

HIV data emanating from the review of the previous National Strategic Plan for 2012 to 2016 indicated that a third of all new HIV infections occurred amongst the youth. In response, President Ramaphosa, who was then the Chairperson of SANAC, called for a collective response to curb the spread of HIV among the youth, particularly adolescent girls and young women. This gave rise to the launch of the three-year

Campaign was a direct response to the alarming rates of HIV infection, school drop-outs, teenage pregnancy, illegal abortions, gender-based violence, substance abuse and the lack of economic opportunities for girls, especially the black girl child.

Although infection rates among adolescent girls and young women have come slightly down, they are nowhere near the optimum bar. On the other hand, new HIV infection rates have been steadily increasing a couple of years now.

Therefore, HIV prevention among the youth in their diversity remain a priority to us as SANAC and as government. We will not realise our goal

of ending AIDS by 2030 if we do not proactively address HIV infection challenges among the youth.

They account for a large proportion of the general population.

In 2020, the total number of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 was 9,57 million.

3,6 million of them were at school and doing grades 9 to 12.

About 1,7 million were in tertiary institutions and,

A whopping 3,2 million were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This number remains a concern to us as government.

In South Africa, youth programmes and initiatives play a vital role in providing access to and accelerating uptake of comprehensive healthcare and prevention services. However, the mid-term review of the current National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB, STIs 2017-2022 (NSP) indicates a very limited number of existing interventions targeting adolescent boys and young men (ABYM) in their diversity. With an exception to hugely successful Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision programme (VMMC), there is a wide service gap in the provision of ABYM focused HIV care, prevention, and treatment.

Several lessons have been drawn from various studies, evaluations and assessments of current programmes targeting predominantly AGYW. The outcomes of these is unanimous in identifying the need for integrated programming to address the needs of adolescents and young

2022, the National Youth Development Policy and very robust youth-led consultative processes coordinated by SANAC.

The learnings and recommendations from the various strategies and consultations have resulted into intensified efforts and a deliberate youth-led process for the development of a revitalized and optimised youth prevention strategy.

The three-year National Youth HIV Prevention Strategy (2022-2025) rests on the integration of critical health and social services; youth development programmes; social & behaviour change communication and, improved access to quality health products and services.

The key purpose of the strategy is to raise awareness about HIV, TB, STIs, Sexual and Reproductive Health and other key issues pertinent to the wellbeing of young people. It also seeks to encourage health seeking behaviour through the utilization of health and social services, reinforce knowledge and benefits of behavioural change and prompt an action.

Guided by the leadership of young people, the strategy is named

Zikhala Kanjani?

language of young people. The Nguni term loosely asks the question, how is something happening without a particular act or process having taken place.

We hope that, by using the youth lexicon, chosen by them, we will be able to reach the youth in their diversity with key HIV and SRH messaging, in a language that truly resonates with them.

For example, to communicate various messages, the term Zikhala

This campaign should be an opportunity for us to demonstrate our support and adoption of youth-led, youth-centred and youth-informed approaches. This will strengthen meaningful involvement and participation of young people for continuity, custodianship and sustainability of programmes for young people and