

Welcome address by Cllr Mpume Sithole at Provincial Anti-Substance Abuse Summit

26 June 2017 – Ocean Convention Centre, Durban

Programme Director,
MEC for Social Development, Mama Weziwe Thusi,
HOD –
Members of Parliament,
Councillors,
Civil society,
Government officials,
Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Sanibonani,

We would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the people of eThekweni and welcome you to this Provincial Anti-Substance Abuse Summit convened by the Department of Social Development in partnership with other government departments, Municipalities and Civil Society organizations.

We thank you for choosing our city to host the event of such magnitude with so many stakeholders. You have chosen a powerful theme – which is - **“KwaZulu Natal Unites Against Substance Abuse, Moving Forward To Reclaim Our Communities”**.

We are optimistic that this will not be just another talk show where we want to hear ourselves. I hope this will not be about great speeches but a summit that will have practical solutions for the people of this province.

At the end of the day, all stakeholders must go back and implement. The success of our campaign against substance abuse doesn't rely on government but all of us. It is therefore imperative that at all times, we work together.

We call on individuals, parents, neighbourhood and community at large to work together in combating drugs and substance abuse. After all, we are all affected by drugs and substance abuse. Drugs is our problem.

We must therefore use this summit to share best practices in demand, supply and harm reduction in the management of anti- substance abuse interventions;

We must strengthen effective partnerships with all key stakeholders with the aim of establishing and strengthening the functionality of Provincial, District Anti-Substance Abuse Forums and Local Drug Action Committees.

In eThekweni we have employed various measures in the past to deal with the prevalence of substance abuse in communities had not effectively dealt with the problem. We have considered an early intervention, prevention, treatment and after care services as a continuum of services are relied upon.

The Qalakabusha Social Intervention was initiated in 2014 by eThekweni Municipality to respond to issues of Drug and Substance Abuse within eThekweni Municipal Area through a Seven Point Intervention Plan as a

response to issues raised by drug users during the profiling exercise and these include:

1. Outreach and Reception,
2. Screening and Psychosocial Support,
3. Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation,
4. Skills Development and Empowerment,
5. Identity Documents,
6. Reunification and Reintegration as well as
7. Shelters and Halfway Houses.

To date more than 1500 people have been reached through the outreach programme. At least more than 500 have been screened, counselled and referred accordingly by Social Workers from DSD, Denis Hurley Centre and UNISA Brightside 4th year students.

A total of 170 drug users were referred for treatment at Newlands Park and Sitholimpilo Rehabilitation Centres. Through partnerships with Wellness Trust and Denis Hurley Centre at least 300 people have been sponsored by the two organisations to apply for ID documents and 90% of them have received new ID's. The same organisations have assisted with skills development targeting both drug users and homeless persons.

Despite the progress that we have made, but we still have a number of lessons and challenges that we want to present in this summit. We are optimistic that this summit will assist us to deal with these challenges as we will be sharing knowledge.

On behalf of the mayor Zandile Gumede and chairperson of eThekweni District Anti Substance Abuse Forum, I welcome you. We wish you all the best for this summit.