



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Address delivered by Basic Education Deputy Minister, Dr Reginah Mhaule, MP, on the occasion of the launch of Breaking the Silence TV series

28 November 2021

Programme Director

Deputy Minister

MECs,

SABC Executives

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to welcome all our guests and sponsors to the launch of this ground-breaking initiative, namely the “Breaking the Silence” television series.

This television series is developed with the Red Pepper Studios and Kheth’impilo through the Global Fund programme on Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW).

This ground-breaking television project is a 13-episode production.

It will be broadcast on public broadcaster the SABC and later some pay-per-view television channels at no cost to the government.

The production debuts on SABC 1 from the 3rd of January 2022, every Monday, at 16:00

This is the government’s coordinated response to the scourge of HIV while also promoting Sexuality Education through the most loved medium, television, and targeting school-going youth, especially adolescent girls.

The main aim of this series is to influence behavioural changes in young people regarding HIV/AIDS, promote sexual and reproductive health, and promote condom use.

Evidently, preaching to young people about the dangers of early sexual debut, unplanned pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, and condom use hasn't yielded the desired results.

New research demonstrates that the promotion of abstinence messaging alone has not impacted behaviour and reduced the incidences of early and unplanned learner pregnancies and HIV infection among our youth.

Thus, the global community network on HIV and AIDS has resolved that a combination of prevention strategies are required to turn the situation around.

They recommend a singular focus on HIV prevention, condom usage and promotion of contraception amongst adolescent girls.

The global HIV/AIDS network believes these measures are adequate to change the situation of unplanned learner pregnancies and rising HIV infection among school-going youth.

Furthermore, research suggests that condom use among South African youth has dropped significantly in recent years despite Comprehensive Sexuality Education, the HIV and AIDS Life skills Education Programmes offered in schools.

Thus, it is no brainer that we are resorting to the time-honoured tactic to engage young people through entertainment while teaching them life-changing skills.

Hence, the Break the Silence television series uses a docutainment format that captures the intergenerational dialogue between teachers and learners, using the 'Reality TV style'.

The television series is influenced by empirical evidence that one of the best education modalities to drive Comprehensive Sexuality Education effectively is through a continuous, safe and protected teacher-learner dialogue.

The series is designed to provide structured opportunities for young people to honestly explore their own attitudes and values in the arena of sexual and reproductive health.

It further offers them opportunities to practice the skills they acquire through dialogues, thus helping them to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

The series considers that our education centres deliver school-based Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Services by design.

The School-based health programme is the flagship of the comprehensive Care and Support for Teaching Learning (CSTL) Programme that we deliver to most schools.

The flagship Care and Support initiative is known as the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP), implemented with the Department of Health.

The Health Programme contributes to learners' health and well-being by screening them for health barriers to learning.

The Programme offers a comprehensive and integrated package of services, including sexual and reproductive health services for older learners.

The Health Services Package includes a significant health education component such as leading a healthy lifestyle and drug and substance abuse awareness.

And health screening for vision, hearing, oral health and TB and onsite services such as deworming and immunisation.

Thus, it is no coincidence that the lead department in this innovative educational "Breaking the Silence" television series is a brainchild of our Department of Basic Education

As a teacher myself, I know the value of education; it is the only discipline that offers long-lasting behavioural changes to young people.

As the government, we have pinned our hopes on basic education reforms as a ladder out of poverty, boosting economic growth, and achieving long-term prosperity.

Through quality education, we believe we will win our new struggle against the triple burden of diseases, namely the COVID-19, rising HIV infection amongst adolescent girls, and the scourge of TB.

In his recent address to the Inter-Ministerial Committee of the South African National Aids Council, Deputy President H.E David Mabuza called for an integrated response to HIV and AIDS, TB and COVID-19.

Thus, Breaking the Silence is one part of a long term government strategy to influence society and curb this burden of triple diseases.

As we know, the poor and vulnerable tend to be susceptible to diseases such as HIV/Aids and TB.

Our target response to this triple disease burden must alter the disease progression amongst vulnerable adults, young girls and people living with comorbidities.

As the government, we are fully aware that the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan depends on a healthy adult population, flourishing learners in proper schools and the vulnerable being cushioned from the ravages of poverty and neglect.

The National Strategic Plan on HIV, TB and STIs, which ends in March 2023, focuses on young people, especially adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 24.

Programme director, another silence we need to break concerns the menace of gender-based violence that disproportionately affects women and girl children.

Despite the concerted efforts in addressing gender-based violence in the country, this malady continues unabated.

There are ongoing instances of femicide, with some deaths committed in the most heinous manner imaginable.

We have to break the spell of this tragedy.

Surely, someone knows something.

I am happy to report that it is now a criminal offence to remain silent if one witnesses or knows of the incidence(s) of gender-based violence and femicide.

It is a moral imperative to report, campaign for the end of gender-based violence and raises awareness in every corner of society.

The slogan, if you see something, say something, is now embedded in our legislative framework.

As a society, to end gender-based violence, we must move away from toxic masculinities towards transformative masculinities.

We must reach a point where perpetrators, primarily men, must take responsibility for their actions and stop dehumanising women and girls.

We must do more every day, not just during the global commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children.

The 2021 theme is “The Year of Charlotte Manny Maxeke – 16 Days of Activism – moving from awareness to accountability”.

The theme is timely, and it is about time we accelerate the arrest and prosecution of gender-based violence offenders.

Ultimately, our job must be to move society towards a Gender-Just and Violence-Free Society.

Thus, we move beyond the rhetoric and exchange from awareness-raising by civil society formations and government to accountability.

Equally, we must reject toxic feminism fuelled by the #MenAreTrash brigade and the government’s lethargy in arresting and prosecuting perpetrators of gender-based violence.

It is not about men being trash but the proliferation of broken men produced by a long line of broken families.

It is commonly known in our country that most boy children are raised in women-headed households.

The absence of father figures in SA homes is in itself an endemic in our society, and we need to ask uncomfortable questions about it.

Clearly, this absence of male figures amongst the growing boy children contributes to the male monsters lurking in the homes, streets, shadows and public toilets.

Clearly, there's a role for public schooling to plug the gaps left by absent fathers through teaching the values of positive masculinities.

As a society, we must deal head-on with the pervasive nature of patriarchy and toxic masculinities; we must rebuild the broken social fabric of our communities.

It starts at a family level, and it begins with me.

We call upon all sectors of society to produce a new man who takes responsibility for one's actions and speaks out to break the silence.

We need men who place a premium on the power of speaking out as the first step towards healing without expecting wine and roses.

Our women and children can only begin a healing journey if the generational curse of pervasive violence no longer permeates their spaces.

We call upon men and boy children to begin their own healing journeys by first owning up to one's past, showing remorse and seeking professional help to live a new life.

The task of every man, boy and rehabilitated abuser is to join hands and seek to banish the shame of one's childhood/adulthood of violence of any nature by putting himself through public humiliation of disclosure and work to end the scourge.

The idea is to break the family curses and start a new chapter that places the women's bodily integrity and sanctity of their lives on top of the agenda.

In conclusion, if we are to end the pervasive rape culture, ingrained patriarchy and gender-based violence in general, impunity must come to an end, and accountability must be the order of the day.

I thank you.