

**SPEECH BY THE Cllr R PELODIA,
MEMBER OF THE MAYORAL
COMMITTEE DURING THE WATER
WEEK AWARENESS CAMPAIGN, HELD
AT KWAZAMOKUHLE SECONDARY
SCHOOL ON 06 MARCH 2009.**

Program Director

Councillors

**Representatives from the Department of
Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF)**

Head Masters

Teachers

Members of the community

Learners

Ladies and Gentleman

Water is one of nature's most important gifts to mankind, which is essential to life, a person's survival depends on drinking water.

Water is one of the most essential elements to good health -- it is necessary for the digestion and absorption of food; helps maintain proper muscle tone; supplies oxygen and nutrients to the cells; rids the body of wastes; and serves as a natural air conditioning system, therefore it is important to use it meaningfully.

It is indeed an honour and privilege that Steve Tshwete Local Municipality was one of the municipalities identified by DWAF to

host the National Water Week awareness campaign in Mpumalanga.

The Steve Tshwete Local Municipality is committed to improve the quality of life of all its residents by providing them with access to basic water and sanitation service. Let us work together in emphasising the theme for water awareness week: **“WATER IS LIFE: SECURING THE NATION'S NEEDS ACROSS GENERATIONS”**

This theme is influenced by the World Water Day 2009 theme, **“Water brings Life.”** Furthermore it echoes the 5th World Water Forum theme **“Bridging divides for water,”** which talks to trans-boundary waters. However since the key target is local citizens the theme is coined in such a way that it address the

local populace. And again South Africa is bidding for the 6th 2012 World Water Forum, the theme is expected to take us through to that international event.

Programme Director, allow me to highlight that Steve Tshwete Municipality has done well in improving access to safe drinking water. To date access to clean water has increased from 99.5% in 2007 to 99.8% in 2008. In 2007 only 97.5% had access to sanitation and this number has increased in 2008 to 98.5%.

This event also gives us an opportunity to educate our community about the costs involved in ensuring that they are provided with clean water from taps.

Most of us never even give a thought of what it takes to have clean water from our taps.

Maybe, I just need to briefly give a global idea of the stringent process that is undergone before we access clean water from our taps.

In Steve Tshwete Municipality, water is pumped from the dams by means of electricity.

It is then purified using the necessary chemicals and then transferred to our reservoirs which is then transferred to water reticulation and finally to domestic water meters.

I believe you now understand what happens behind accessing clean water.

It therefore my plea today, that we save each and every drop of water by reporting pipe burst in time and tap leakages so that we can remain the best country in providing clean water, as now, we are the second country in the entire world that is able to provide clean water to its residents.

Children are our main target audience for this campaign, often they are the first to pick up hygiene messages and change their behaviour; adults may be reluctant to alter habits ingrained over the course of a lifetime. The water awareness campaign recognises that children are often

responsible for the care of younger siblings and teaches them to become health educators for their family, friends and ultimately the whole community. The backlog that we are addressing with regard to access to safe water and proper sanitation still exposes poor communities to various health risks, including cholera.

Whilst on cholera, it is unfortunate that our province has been hit by **Cholera Outbreak** since the first week of January 2009. Health officials noticed an increase of people reporting with diarrhoea in many health facilities especially in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, and it later spread in other areas in Mbombela,

Thaba Chweu, Nkomazi and Umjindi Municipalities. As a municipality we are still fortunate that we were not affected.

Efforts to combat this illness will be meaningless if individuals do not take responsibility for their lives. This can be done by internalizing basic hygiene health practices at all times such as ensuring to wash hands before handling food, wash hands after visiting the toilet, wash hands before handling food, wash hands after visiting the toilet, wash hands before handling food, wash hands after visiting the toilet, wash hands after changing nappies, usage of clean sanitation hygiene, wash fruits and vegetables before use, store purified water

in clean containers and keep it covered, keep food covered, do not play or use water from streams, rivers and dams and use water that has been purified or boiled.

These measures are basic and very important for sustenance of good health.

Regrettably, the outbreak has claimed lives of our beloved ones and has affected many in our province. It is in this context that I want to make a clarion call to all the people in the Steve Tshwete Municipality to heed this message and help contain the spread of cholera in the province.

Remember cholera is curable, if you suspect or see early signs which could include vomiting, mild or severe diarrhoea, muscle

cramps or dehydration, waste no time, report to the nearest health facility for treatment.

Let us use this opportunity to find tangible ways in which we work together in building a healthy community that is free of diseases and able to save water.

Every person shall have the right to an environment which is not detrimental to his or her health."

I thank you!