

SPEECH FOR DAN PLATO

NORWEIGEN ROYAL VISIT TO CLINIC

26 NOVEMBER 2009

Their Majesties, King Harald and Queen Sonja

Naledi Pandor, Minister of Science and Technology

Ambassador Hilden

Professor Russel Botman

Ladies and Gentlemen

Here in Uitsig, we are standing in what has been known as the TB capital of the world, where every person can say that they have either been infected or know someone who has been infected with TB. And I am told that the health data shows this terrible problem is getting worse.

TB is one of the biggest health threats in South Africa, and we have the fourth worst TB epidemic in the world. The Western Cape has a quarter of all TB cases in the country.

Although I am the Mayor of Cape Town, I am also the ward councillor for Uitsig, which means I am directly elected to serve this community and represent it in Council. I can tell you from personal experience that there are enormous social, economic and environmental challenges to be dealt with in this area, and our TB statistics show that very clearly.

If we want to make a lasting impact on TB in Uitsig, we need to deal with the unemployment, overcrowding, school drop-out rate, substance abuse problem and food insecurity that is causing people to get TB. Yes, we need to strengthen our health systems and we need to educate and promote healthy behaviors in our communities, but sustainable change can only happen if we deal with poverty.

This is what we in government call 'mainstreaming', and it requires us to target TB through all the other work we do in Uitsig – in the way we build houses, promote economic development and support our youth.

Implementing all the possible interventions requires a huge commitment from government, donors and development agencies to make resources available. It also requires a commitment from communities to effectively use these opportunities. And it requires that all the different stakeholders work together to make sure their energies and resources are used to get the maximum possible benefit.

Here in Uitsig we are now fortunate to have a vehicle to achieve this coordination in the form of the TB-Free Kids Project. This is a multi-sectoral collaborative partnership between the City of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University's Desmond Tutu TB Centre which aims to intervene in Uitsig and neighbouring Ravensmead so that we can purge our communities of TB.

The Desmond Tutu TB Centre is a leading international centre of TB research. Their work is used to create policies for the national, continental and international fight against TB, and they have various international partnerships including with Norwegian universities. Over the past 16 years this centre have been conducting numerous studies in the Uitsig community to assist, among other things, in understanding how TB is related to social and economic issues.

The TB-Free Kids Project is also linked to the Dignified Spaces Project, which is an excellent example of a mainstreamed approach to TB care, where cleaning and environmental work takes place for the purposes of health and safety and human development.

Following its extremely valuable implementation of the Dignified Spaces Project in Khayelitsha the next dignified spaces will be created in Uitsig schools and clinic. I am looking forward to seeing what you are able to achieve here.

Thank you.