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MEDIA STATEMENT

Attention: **News Editors, Reporters, Online Reporter, Executive Producers**

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MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT WISHES RESIDENCE OF MPUMALANGA A MEANINGFUL WORLD POPULATION DAY

Mbombela – Today the 11th of July, The Department of Social Development joins the global community in celebrating World Population Day. Ms. Nompumelelo Hlophe, the MEC For Social Development in Mpumalanga, extends her warm wishes to residence of the province, as they celebrate this memorable day.

This year, the day is commemorated under the theme: ***‘Realizing the hopes and aspirations of young people - today and for the Future’***.

On this day, the global community, pays a special focus on the youth and seeks to put their needs and aspirations at the centre of conversations and agenda of development. With over 60% of Mpumalanga’s population under the age of 35, the youth play a critical role in shaping the province’s future, therefore, their wellbeing is of paramount importance in securing a prosperous future for the province. This prosperous future is however dependent on their health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and social inclusion.

To this end, the Department of Social Development, is currently supporting 48 Youth Development Centres, distributed across the province. These centres provide a range of services to the youth, including, but not limited to:

- *Mentorship programmes* – aimed at mentoring young people to participate meaningfully in society;
- *Digital skills programmes* – aimed at enabling the youth to be ‘tech savvy’ and to utilise digital media, well &
- *Job preparation & entrepreneurship programmes* – aimed at preparing the youth for the ‘world of work’ and supporting them in their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Media Statement on World Population Day (cont)

Furthermore, programmes such You Only Live Once (YOLO), Men Championing Change as well as Traditional Leaders Programmes (the Behavioural Change Programmes), are implemented in the department to enable young people to navigate life better. This focus on young people, ties very well with the objectives of the Medium-term Development Plan, Objective 2 of the 7th Administration, that identify women, the youth and people with disabilities, as the section of the population, in need of greater support in the realisation of a prosperous future for South Africa.

Information gathered in various engagements with the youth, through the workshops on Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights and other programmes in the department, reveals disturbing practices, the youth engage in their quest to secure an enjoyable future. This leads them to multiple sexual partners, which heightens their chances of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and is linked to unintended pregnancies and other health complications. This strengthens the call for multiple stakeholders to 'join hands' and fight this disturbing practice.

Throughout the month of July and extending to the year, the department will visit Youth Development Centres to strengthen their messaging on responsible sexual behaviour, patriotism & self-reliance. The Behavioural Change programmes will also be intensified to reach out to more youth, throughout the year. The department will also partner with municipalities, other development agencies, including the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the departments of Health, Education, Co-operative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs, to drive these programmes. Further engagements with the youth will continue through social media, dialogues, workshops and seminars, throughout the financial year.

The MEC of Social Development, Ms. Nompumelelo Hlophe, once again wishes communities in Mpumalanga a joyous and meaningful World Population Day.

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