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## MEDIA STATEMENT

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### **SALGA joins the World Aids Day 2023 and calls on municipalities to strengthen their multisectoral response to HIV and AIDS**

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The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) joins the world and the country in the annual commemoration of World AIDS Day. World AIDS Day is commemorated each year on the 1st of December and this year the National World AIDS day commemoration will take place in Mandeni Local Municipality in the iLembe District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal on the 01 December 2023 under the theme “Let Communities Lead.”

The President of SALGA Cllr Bheke Stofile, representing organized local government will deliver a message of support as a partner in the “Decentralised Response to HIV and AIDS in South Africa” “The World AIDS Day commemoration presents an opportunity to raise awareness about the disease and its consequent health, social, and economic implications; reinforce efforts to prevent further spread of the disease and available treatment options; and communicate progress made in the response to the AIDS epidemic,” says Cllr Bheke Stofile.

SALGA recognizes the key role that has been assigned to municipalities in the National Strategic Plan 2023-2028 under the pillar Governance and Leadership. SALGA continues to support municipalities as part of the country’s multisectoral response to HIV, STIs and TB.

Cllr Bheke Stofile says: “Through our collaboration with South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) and other stakeholders, SALGA has capacitated Councilors and officials on their roles and responsibilities on HIV, STIs and TB in five provinces and other planned before the end of the 2023/2024”.

AIDS remains a public health challenge across the world (UNAIDS 2023) with 39 million people living with HIV; 1.3 million new infections; 630 000 people having lost their lives due to AIDS-related illnesses in 2022; and 29.8 million people accessing antiretroviral therapy.

South Africa accounts for 20% of new HIV infections and 20% of people living with HIV globally. Although the HIV prevalence in the country has plateaued at 13.2% for the last five years, the number of people living with HIV continues to increase annually. Approximately 8 million people live with HIV in the country.

According to Thembisa Version 4.6, in 2022, HIV prevalence was the highest in KwaZulu-Natal at 17.6%, and the lowest in the Western Cape at 7.4%. Research shows that the burden of the epidemic is overwhelmingly borne by black Africans, with priority populations disproportionately marginalised in accessing health services.

SANAC (2023) posits that South Africa is currently at 95-78-92 for the total population serviced through the Public and Private sector, this means, 95% of all HIV positive individuals have been diagnosed, 78% of those diagnosed are receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) and 92% of those on ART have achieved viral load suppression.

The results for each of the sub-populations vary and stand as follows: Adult Females at 96-82-93, Adult Males at 95-71-93, and Children (<15) at 82-68-67. The aim is to diagnose 95% of all HIV-positive individuals, provide antiretroviral therapy (ART) for 95% of those diagnosed and achieve viral suppression for 95% of those treated by 2030.

SALGA calls on municipalities to strengthen their multisectoral response structures and ensure that District AIDS Councils as well as Local AIDS Councils sit regularly, and that competent people are appointed for the management of this function.

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