

# **Launch of Bayethe! Aids Awareness Programme for Boys**

**Linduzulu Palace, Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal**

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**Speech by Dr Con Fauconnier**

**Chief Executive, Kumba Resources Limited**

Good afternoon your majesty, your royal highness, members of the royal family, honourable Inkosi Ngubane, Amakhosi, representatives of government, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

This is an auspicious day – one that marks a successful partnership between our subsidiary Ticor SA and His Majesty stretching back over three years in tackling a crisis that not one of us could attempt alone. It marks the start of a new partnership between His Majesty and Kumba that will stretch into the future.

A recent report by the Medical Research Council analysed the cause-specific death rates in each of our nine provinces and highlighted that while causes of death differ in the provinces, HIV/Aids is the leading

killer across the board. It also showed that Western Cape residents have the highest life expectancy in the country, probably due to a relatively low HIV infection rate.

In stark contrast, life expectancy in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga is 11 years lower or just 52 years old. That puts these provinces on to the lowest life expectancy list published by *The Economist*. When you compare that to the highest life expectancy of Japan and Sweden at over 80 years, the loss to our nation becomes clearer. The report also states that HIV is the leading cause of premature or early death in all provinces. That strikes at the heart of our workforce, people, families and friends.

The report also noted that South Africa is dealing with a range of diseases. Communicable diseases – such as HIV-Aids and TB; non-communicable diseases – such as malaria; and injuries including homicide and road traffic accidents are all having a significant effect on cause-of-death profiles.

The launch of the Bayethe! Aids Awareness Programme for Boys, which follows the highly successful campaign targeted at maidens, is a clear signal that, together, we can tackle this pandemic and win.

It is also evidence that government and business are moving in the right direction in dealing with a disease that strikes at the very heart of society, killing parents, orphaning children and shattering families.

Kumba Resources has sponsored the second phase of the awareness programme because dealing with Aids ceased to be philanthropy some time ago. It has become a business and social imperative – our very survival depends on it.

Kumba employs around 9 000 people directly and another 4 000 indirectly. Around 1 000 of those jobs are here, in KwaZulu-Natal. That's one thousand families. Our own HIV/Aids programme is aimed at preventing more people around our operations from becoming infected, extending the lives of those infected for as long as possible for the benefit of the company and society at large. It also aims to ensure that the impact of the disease on the company is managed to

enable Kumba to grow and contribute to South Africa's developing economy.

In 2003, Kumba commissioned a pilot study in the community surrounding our Thabazimbi iron ore mine in Limpopo. The success of this initiative was reflected in improved disclosure cases, increased availability of condoms, effective condom usage, improved capacity of community-based organisations, improved public-private partnership networks and increased awareness of HIV/Aids. The project is now being rolled out nationally at our operations in Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and here, in KwaZulu-Natal. In each region, we concentrate on consulting with all stakeholders and customising the project to meet stated community needs.

Last year, we spent R2,7 million on our HIV/Aids programme. This was mainly on conducting prevalence studies at all our operations, training to raise the awareness levels of our employees, training of peer educators, conducting voluntary counselling and testing and a medical care and disease management programme. This includes

appropriate supplements, immune boosters, preventative therapy and anti-retroviral therapy.

There is only one way we will win this fight. Together. There is only one way we will overcome this killer. Education.

When icons such as His Majesty take the lead in high-profile campaigns such as the Bayethe! programme, we take great hope.

His Majesty's HIV/Aids programme is making a real difference because it is designed for the many children involved in traditional youth festivals. The minders who prepare the youth for this transition have been trained to advise and take the lead on AIDS awareness. This programme of education through traditional values has already reached 40 000 maidens and will have covered all regions of the province by 2007. Twenty thousand Aids manuals have been distributed. Now the focus turns to educating the boys of the province.

Together, we are harnessing the power of hope.

Your Majesty, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you.