

## **MVA SPEECH**

Ladies & Gentlemen

I acknowledge the presence of dignitaries of distinction from various spheres of our society but also the presence of a large number of learners from some 20 schools.

In view of the fact that the purpose of this impressive gathering is to launch a kid's power project, please bear with me that for the sake of our learners, I will take a while to bring into perspective issues which may be elementary knowledge for our adults.

L&G

Since the advent of animal drawn and self-propelled vehicles and the building of roads and streets, pedestrians and drivers of such vehicles have been wavering on the edge of a dangerous conflict zone because of their joint use of roads and streets.

Similarly heavy trucks carrying cargo and buses and fast cars transporting passengers are confined to the use of constructed strips of surfaced or unsurfaced land referred to as our streets or national and other roads. There are therefore many players, all using and claiming as their right, the use of those narrow, strips of land to move from one point to another. The scene is therefore set for conflict which can result in accidents causing at least minor or major material damage and at worst, the former as well as serious injuries and loss of lives. And let me assure you learners that there is only thin margin of safety between you as pedestrian or passenger in a vehicle and potential disaster. Unfortunately that margin is getting thinner as our streets and roads become more congested due to population growth and the prevalence of more and more vehicles of all kinds on our roads and streets.

The margin of safety to which I referred is maintained firstly by the existence of a number of traffic rules which apply both to pedestrians and drivers of all vehicles as well as a large number of road signs and facilities like traffic robots regulating the flow of traffic and pedestrians who also use our streets and roads.

Young learners, like with everything else in life for which mankind applies its brain power to draw up rules and regulations and manufacture facilities, the overriding condition is that once those rules are laid down as law, all the stakeholders are compelled to carefully obey them. Every time any road user, pedestrian or vehicle driver, ignores any of the set rules and facilities, he or she breaches the line of safety and therefore endangers his/her own life or those of others or exposes his/her property and other to material damage.

It very often only takes one disobedience to such traffic rules to cause destruction and death among passengers, pedestrians and thousands of N\$ of damage to vehicles and other property. On the other hand it is such a fascinating sight to observe from a high suitable point how even high volume traffic flows smoothly with pedestrians also using the street when all road users observe traffic rules. I wish to direct a special word of caution to our learners present here today. You are very often road users as pedestrians. It is wise to remember that as pedestrian you have a special responsibility to observe traffic rules as they apply to you since you are the ones to get hurt or may be maimed even for the rest of your life if your are involved in a traffic accident due to your negligence or by showing off your bravery in front of your friends, that is to disobey traffic rules.

No money you may be paid out after an accident will make you the perfect person whom you now are. It is also wise to be cautious in traffic and to make sure that a driver of a vehicle did stop when he/she was supposed to do so instead of assuming such a vehicle will stop. Remember you will be the one who will get hurt even if it were the drivers mistake.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It remains an indisputable fact that the lives of our young people lost due to traffic accidents remains an incalculable loss for the country. Similarly debilitating traffic accidents in which our young people are involved should be regarded as double edged swords since it often involves large sums of direct expenditure e.g. through MVA claims etc, but also such a young person may never be able to develop his/her full potential and therefore may be unable to contribute to our country's GDP to the extent, he/she could have. In a vast country, richly endowed with natural wealth much of which still beg for exploitation, but with a small population tremendously short of own experts in practically every field, our only hope for the future should be pinned on our youth. The safety and well being besides all possible development opportunities for our young people to be able to rise to the needs of the country in future, should not be debatable issues. If not, Namibia will

not in the foreseeable future be able to rely on own expertise. Namibia will fall behind on growing demands for well developed human capital and will have to pay the price of foreigners occupying our key technical and other positions. Such situation amounts to being colonised and not entirely being your own boss.

Our children should avoid it but it remains the collective responsibility of Government, parastatals, NGO's the Private Sector etc to jointly contribute to the safety and development of our children.

I therefore laud this initiative of the MVA to empower our children with knowledge of road safety while using our streets or roads. The initiative should be taken to all schools and in fact I want to go as far as suggesting that all schools should introduce a subject covering all aspects of safety on roads as integral part of the school curriculum.

Safety on our roads should become a way of living for all citizens and this can only be achieved if the concept is introduced and nurtured right through a child's school career. The incidental exposure of scholar patrols to some traffic do's and dont's does not suffice because of the dangers and in fact loss of life to which scholars are exposed.

The loss of a child's life in a vehicle accident causes too much sorrow and loss to the family and the country to be left to incidental training. The MVA will undoubtedly greatly boost its image by taking today's initiative much further for the sake of safeguarding our upcoming generation. In the meantime the continued involvement of the MVA with all schools will already establish them as an important role player in the preparation of future Namibian citizens.

In view of the above it is of great importance for planning purposes that statistics gathered on road injuries and fatalities should clearly indicate the number of children involved.

The use of the term 'child' should therefore be clearly defined in terms of age so as to assist police officers who are usually called to an accident scene, to be more precise on the number of children involved in accidents.

The available statistics for 2009 indicate a 0% injuries and or deaths for children for the months of, January to the end of April 2009. This figure is derived at simply because the ages of children involved in accidents for those months were not ascertained. The available figure for May only indicates deaths of children

under 17 and not injuries whereas the statistics for June and July 2009 indicate fatalities and injuries.

A standard norm should be laid down which would ensure reliable and comparable information on the involvement of children in road accidents in Namibia.

With reliable figures in hand the necessary planning can be done to avoid such casualties.

We owe it to our children to protect them for our country.