

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PREMIER RM  
MTSHWENI-TSIPANE ON THE PROVINCIAL COVID-  
19 VACCINE ROLLOUT PLAN**

**DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2021**

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**INTRODUCTION**

1. Ladies and gentlemen of the media, thank you for honouring our invitation and forming part of this historic event in our efforts, as government, to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. As you are all aware, it is almost a year since the World Health Organization declared the Coronavirus a pandemic. It has also been almost a year since the Mpumalanga Province reported its first case of Covid-19 on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020.
3. This virus has spread exponentially across the length and breadth of our Province, our country, and the world. This pandemic has wreaked untold damage and havoc to life and livelihoods as we knew it.

**CURRENT STATUS**

4. To date, South Africa has reported over **1 498 766** positive cases of COVID-19 with more than **48 708** people succumbing to the virus.
5. In Mpumalanga we have reported over **69 613** covid-19 positive cases with a mortality rate of **1213** which translates to **1,7%**. Our Province continues to record a recovery rate of **96 %**. We currently have **1 611** active cases in the Province.
6. These are not just statistics, they represent real people who were mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, friends, breadwinners and active members of their communities.
7. We have also sadly lost 41 of our Health Care Workers in the Province who have selflessly sacrificed their lives to save others. May I take this opportunity to once again relay our deepest condolences to the families, relatives and friends of those we have lost as a result of this pandemic.
8. I would like to extend the Provincial Government's warmest gratitude to all our frontline workers including our health care workers in public and private hospitals, our emergency service workers and members of South

African Police Service and the South African Defence Force who continue to work tirelessly to fight against the pandemic. Your dedication and devotion has not gone unnoticed and is highly appreciated.

## **BACKGROUND**

9. Today we are here to launch the provincial roll out of the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. As you are aware the country is at the tail end of the second wave which was much more severe than the first because of the new variant, 501Y.V2.

## **ARRIVAL OF VACCINES**

10. Ladies and gentlemen of the media, the first batch of 80 000 Johnson and Johnson vaccines arrived in the country on the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2021 following the sterling work by the Department of Health as well as the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Covid-19 vaccines. Government has kept to its commitment to start the vaccination programme by the middle of February.

11. The J&J vaccine has been approved as part of the Sisonke study of the Medical Research Council. The vaccines have been delivered and will be located centrally at the Mzansi Ethical Centre warehouse in Middelburg.
12. For the first batch, the Medical Research Council identified Rob Ferreira Hospital and Witbank Hospital as the two sites in Mpumalanga to receive the vaccines because of the number of Health Care workers affected.
13. The Centre will then distribute it to the two facilities identified by the Medical Research Council for the first batch. Rob Ferreira Hospital is far from Middelburg, hence it will not be feasible to transport them daily, so it will be stored in the hospital pharmacy. Mzansi will be transporting the required number of vaccines to Witbank Hospital on a daily basis.
14. 2000 doses of the vaccine, have been delivered to the Rob Ferreira hospital and 1640 doses will be delivered to the Witbank Hospital.
15. The J&J vaccines that we have received has a 57% protection against moderate to severe Covid-19 infections,

85% protection against severe infections and 100% protection against death.

16. The decision to start with the Health Care Workers first was the correct one and the rest of us shall follow. Statistics show that our Health workers are most susceptible to contract the COVID- 19 infection. We are also preparing for a possible third wave that could be experienced in May this year. If this happens, we need to have all our health workers healthy and protected against the virus.

## **PHASED PROVINCIAL PLAN ON DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 VACCINE**

17. In planning for the vaccination programme, the province has developed a plan as per the guidelines from the National Health Council (NHC). The programme will be rolled out in a three phased approach, as follows;

- Phase 1 which will cover immunization of all health care workers,
- Phase 2 which will cover essential workers, persons in congregate settings, persons over 60 years of age and persons over 18 years with co-morbidities.
- Phase 3 which will cover all persons over 18 years.

18. The targeted cohort for Phase 1 of the vaccine implementation will cover the total of **69 652** health care workers across the Province, inclusive of public and private health sector.
19. Health workers will be divided into risk categories with those in the priority categories receiving vaccination first. These risk categories are linked to the PPE Risk Categories and reflect the risk of contracting Covid-19 and are outlined as follows;
- Category 1 is comprised of healthcare workers conducting aerosol-generating procedures including intubation, ventilation and taking COVID-19 specimens;
  - Category 2 is comprised of healthcare workers in direct contact with known or suspected COVID-19 patients; and
  - Category 3 is comprised of healthcare workers in contact with patients (who are not known or suspected to have COVID-19).
20. Phase 1 of our vaccination plan shall be administered through;
- Work based vaccination programmes through Occupational Health Care Centres at both Public and Private Hospitals.

- Outreach work-based vaccination programme mobile teams moving from facility to facility at Primary Healthcare Care level.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF TARGETED POPULATION FOR PHASE 2 AND 3**

21. Phase 2 and phase 3 will target an estimated total of *3 164 434* people.
22. The targeted cohort for Phase 2 will include:
  - The essential workers;
  - Persons in congregate settings;
  - Persons above 60 years of age; and
  - Persons above 18 years with co-morbidities;
23. In the same vein, Phase 3 will comprise of:
  - Other persons above 18 years of age.
24. We have identified the following service delivery platforms to implement phase 2 and phase 3 of our roll out plan:
  - Health facility vaccination: which will cater for our communities in rural areas;

- Vaccination Centres: which will include local pharmacies and doctors rooms in both public and private facilities.
- Outreach vaccination programme: shall be conducted by professional outreach teams and will focus on old age homes and other congregated settings.
- Work-based vaccination programme: which will target specific work based areas such as the mining sectors, our industries and government departments.

## **VACCINE SAFETY AND SECURITY**

25. The protection of the vaccine from criminal elements is key to ensuring that we successfully vaccinate the people of Mpumalanga. To this effect, we will collaborate with the SAPS to provide en-route safety of all vehicles transporting the vaccine from the storage centres to various vaccination sites across our Province.

## **CONCLUSION**

26. Ladies and gentlemen of the media, we have weathered the storm brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all experienced the devastating impact of COVID-19 on our communities.



27. Whilst the vaccine program is a proverbial silver lining in our fight against the pandemic, we must continue to exercise maximum caution by continuing to wear our masks, practicing social distancing and washing or sanitizing our hands regularly and thoroughly.
28. I urge the people of Mpumalanga to register on the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS) because if at least 67% of our people are vaccinated, we should have sufficient herd immunity to prevent further transmission of COVID-19 and put an end to the devastation of the pandemic.
29. I thank you.