Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane delivered her State of the Province speech in which she highlighted some of her key goals in revitalizing the province of Mpumalanga under the new administration. According to Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane’s address, the focus for the ANC-led sixth provincial administration of Mpumalanga will be: addressing issues such as youth unemployment, the skills gap, farming, mining and environmental management, township and rural economies, and education and school infrastructure, among other things. The seven key priority areas will therefore be based on economic transformation and job creation; education, skills revolution and health; consolidating the social wage through reliable and quality basic services; spatial integration, human settlements and local government; social cohesion and safe communities; a capable, ethical and developmental state, and a better Africa.

Economic transformation and job creation
On Economic Transformation and Job Creation, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the top of government’s agenda is to transform the economy to serve all people, through shared and inclusive economic growth, expanding ownership in the economy to benefit mostly the disadvantaged sections of society, of which she said can only be achieved through the collaborative action by government, business, labour and civil society.

“This administration shall implement the investment promotion strategy that will ensure new investments are attracted and the level of industrialisation and participation of the private sector is improved.”

“Government’s policy choices and its strategic direction will largely focus on fighting youth unemployment, with a specific emphasis on those that are not in any employment, at school and those that are not in any kind of training or skills development activities, including unemployed graduates.”

Youth development initiatives
Youth development initiatives Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the unemployed youth were one segment of the population hardest hit. “In light of these youth challenges the government has to this end decided to take a bold step by launching a Youth Development Fund to the tune of R250 million over a period of five years.”

“The Provincial Government shall develop a unit to manage the fund that shall focus on youth development programmes, among others;”

“Support small emerging and micro enterprises in particular those that are in townships and rural areas and are owned and run by the youth.”

Strategic infrastructure programmes
In order to boost faster economic growth and to improve the lives of many people in this province.

Mpumalanga SOPA: highlighting the key strategies of improving the province
Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that Government will continue investing in the socio economic infrastructure in the next 5 years. She said that government will expand the Provincial industrial base by focusing mainly on targeted sectors that are labour intensive, promote beneficiation with value chain development potential for job opportunities such as Agro-processing.

She said that the strategic infrastructure that supports economic development and service delivery would be prioritized, including: bulk water and sanitation infrastructure, road infrastructure network and Support infrastructure that promote agriculture especially our emerging farmers.

Cultivating agri-business initiatives

According to the Premier, agriculture still remains the backbone of the economic system both in terms of employment generation as well as provincial and national gross domestic income contribution in the province. As such:

- “The provincial government has completed the Mkhondo agri-hub in the current financial year.”
- “The next 100 days of this administration, government will be calling for requests for proposals for entities with expertise who can assist with implementing marketing and operational strategies for these agri-hubs.”

She added that the establishment of the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market (MIFPM) remains a critical lever to stimulate increased economic development, agricultural production and spatial, social and economic integration in new developments; and in ensuring the provision of basic infrastructure projects.

Expanding and securing healthcare facilities

She said that one of the burning issues is safety in healthcare facilities, which is a matter that was raised by people themselves during her visit to a hospital, including Johannes Kambule on Facebook. Premier Mtshweni -Tsipane assured Mr. Kambule and the people of Mpumalanga that the issue of safety and other concerns are receiving attention. In order to tighten security at healthcare facilities, she said that turnstiles security gates, metal detectors shall be installed and security systems in all healthcare facilities shall be digitalised. Going forward and in response to the NDP, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that government will amongst others:

- In the current Financial Year, start with the feasibility study and the identification of suitable land to build a fully-fledged tertiary hospital within Emalahleni. The current Emalahleni Hospital shall be converted into a regional hospital upon completion of the tertiary hospital.
- “We will continue to invest in the healthcare infrastructure including but not limited to; completing the new Bethal Hospital and hand it over at the end of this financial year. We will also complete and put into operation Primary Health Care facilities in the following areas; Oakley, Pankop, Yukuzanke, Nhlezisizhe 6 and Schuzendal.”

Spatial integration, human settlements

According to Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane the NDP advocates that by 2030, measurable progress shall have been made towards breaking the legacy of the apartheid spatial patterns.

She said that government will therefore, ensure that settlements are built closer to work and economic opportunities.

- “The success of our integrated human settlement plan is depended on effective Inter-Governmental and Inter-Departmental Relations which is central in ensuring properly coordinated planning; improved spatial, social and economic integration in new developments; and in ensuring the provision of basic infrastructure projects.”

She announced that in the current 5 year term, government shall build 100 000 housing opportunities.

- “Special attention will be given to the fastest urbanizing towns like eMalahleni; Steve Tshwete; Govan Mbeki; City of Mnondela; Yekomazi; Bushbuckridge; Thaba Chweu and Victor Khanye. These towns will soon be gazetted as Priority Housing Development Areas.”

Furthermore, she said that new Human Settlements Initiatives will focus on up-scaling the upgrade of all informal settlements that are within the targeted towns.

Expropriation of land

Finally, the Premier mentioned that she supports the expropriation of land and the province will support the amendment of section 25 of the Constitution to clearly define the conditions under which the expropriation of land without compensation can take place.

She said that this will be done according to the dictates of the ANC Election Manifesto. She also said that this will be done in a way that promotes economic development, agricultural production and food security.
The Mpumalanga Provincial Government this year celebrated Mandela Day at Glenmore, Chief Albert Luthuli Municipality. This year, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government visited the Sibanesetfu TVET College, Gert Sibande District, to bid farewell to Mncedisi Mkhaliphi, an astute student from a resource deprived family who will represent the Province in the CIDB World Skills competition in Russia. Government also handed over a house to a older Gogo Melina Mnedebele, who stayed in a mud house and previously suffered exploitations in the farms during the apartheid era. Blankets were also handed over to more than 300 older persons at the Glenmore Community Hall, also a Mandela Birthday cake was shared as part of showing love and care to the older persons.

18 July has been declared Nelson Mandela International Day where South Africans embrace the chance to celebrate Nelson Mandela’s life for the whole of July. This gives everyone the opportunity to heed the call to action for people to recognise their individual power to make an imprint and change the world around them.

As each person acts, they fuel momentum toward positive change, raising awareness and expanding the reach of Mr Mandela’s values, fighting injustice, helping people in need and practicing reconciliation.

MEC for Education Mr. Bonakele Majuba, who acted on behalf of the Mpumalanga Premier said that he was hopeful that Mncedisi Mkhaliphi will fly the Province banner and represent the us well at the competition.

The World Skills Competition is an International competition held bi-annually at the elected venue around the world.

This year’s competition will be held at Kazan, Russia and the focus of this competition is centred around many trades which comprise of plumbing, hospitality, carpentry, welding, automotive repairs, fitting and turning, hairdressing etc.

Expressing his happiness, Mncedisi Mkhaliphi said: “This is a great opportunity for me. I never thought that I would see myself in this position and go to an extent of representing the province,” he said.

MEC Majuba described the late President Mr. Nelson Mandela as a selfless person who dedicated his life to the oppressed people during the commemoration. “He advanced unity regardless of race. It is no coincidence that the Province chose to commemorate this day at this place. What we witnessed here is referred to Ubuntu. We know what our people are facing without employment on a daily basis,” he said.

Mr Mandela became South Africa’s first democratically elected president in 1994. As a champion of reconciliation, he was instrumental in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was set up by South Africa’s Government of National Unity to help deal with the atrocities of apartheid.

Before his presidency, Mandela was heavily involved in anti-apartheid activities. He served 27 years in prison, many of which were spent with other sentenced freedom fighters. While officially retired, he continued to voice his opinion on topical humanitarian issues and campaigns globally for peace, children and the fight against HIV and AIDS.
Smallholder farmers benefit from Mkhuhlu Agri-hub

The Mkhuhlu Agri Hub has made a few strides in the past couple of months since it became operational at the beginning of May 2019. Situated in Mkhuhlu near Hazyview, the Agri-Hub is one the major projects by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, the structure opened its doors to the public, including those buying in bulk, have fresh fruit and vegetables, most of which are supplied to the hub by smallholder or emerging farmers. These are farmers who had no formal market, but they now supply their produce directly to the Agri-Hub, thereby eliminating potential middle-man and unnecessary high transport costs.

The Mkhuhlu Agri Hub prides itself in that it has appointed Agronomists who work closely with local farmers, giving them support in producing for market and unnecessary high transport costs. The Agri-Hub has brought much-needed agro-processing facilities at the doorsteps of farmers, who can now access markets at local, national and international levels, but also create the much-needed employment opportunities mostly for women and the youth. Local traders and surrounding households have started to benefit from it. “The Agri-Hub presents opportunities of value adding and storage to reduce the wastage our farmers have always suffered from, while creating economic spin-offs and the much-needed job opportunities. Moving forward, our farmers are encouraged to work hard and produce more to meet the demand for produce, ensure food security while improving their livelihoods”, says DARDLEA MEC Mr Vusi Shongwe.

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The budget is allocated as follows:

- Programme 1: Administration: R 201 013 million
- Programme 2: Sustainable Resource Management: R 77 339 million
- Programme 3: Farmer Support and Development Services: R 538 250 million
- Programme 4: Technology, Research, and Development: R 144 640 million
- Programme 5: Agriculture Economics: R 538 250 million
- Programme 6: Agriculture Economics: R 18 049 million
- Programme 7: Structured Agriculture Training: R 28 782 million
- Programme 8: Rural Development: R 26 016 million
- Programme 9: Environmental Affairs: R 18 049 million

MEC Shongwe tables just over R1.2B budget for 2019/20

MEC for Department of Agriculture Rural Development Land and Environmental Affairs Mr Vusi Shongwe delivered the Departmental 2019/20 Policy and Budget Vote in the Legislature on the 11 July 2019, announcing plans for the year ahead. The MEC announced that the Government Nutrition Programme (GNP) has since been brought back to the DARDLEA, an idea that will assist the Department in streamlining its activities which include the production inputs, extension services, ploughing and supply to markets.

“In order to accelerate access to markets by farmers, through the GNP we will be supplying produce to the Department of Education, Health, Safety Security and Liaison and Correctional Services”, said MEC Shongwe.

A decision has also been taken and directed to the Department to compile a register of all leased farms in collaboration with Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDRL) indicating the total number of operational and non-operational farms in the Province.

The Department will continue providing direct support to farmers through the provision of mechanisation services and production inputs by planting of 12 060 ha, support 726 food gardens as well as 80 Primary Cooperatives linked to markets including the GNP. “We are already piloting a new sub-programme called Zonda Indlala Programme, aimed at encouraging each household to plant fruit and nuts trees”, said MEC Shongwe. He said the Department will also continue to roll out the Fortune 40 Young Farmer Incubation Programme to ensure that Fortune 40 farms are fully operational and sustainable.

Other key programmes include the continued efforts to combat illegal meat and backyard slaughtering, through the implementation of the Independent Meat Inspection Scheme. The MEC also outlined a programme called Zonda Insila Programme (ZIP), which aims at enhancing knowledge of good waste management principles in communities and thereby reducing the impact of Climate Change.

Before the tabling of the Policy and Budget Speech, MEC Shongwe spent time at the entrance of the Riverside Government Complex, handing out fruits to passing motorists, as he encouraged them to eat healthy, but also to support programmes like Zonda Indlala and Zonda Insila Programmes.

MEC Shongwe tabled a budget of R 1,222,473,000 (One billion, two hundred and twenty two million, and four hundred and seventy three thousand rand).

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MEC for Health in Mpumalanga, Ms Sasekani Manzini has responded to the public outcry on the shortage of ambulances in the province. Speaking to a strong contingency of journalists MEC Sasekani Manzini stated that the procurement of ambulances by the Department is aimed at improving the response time on emergency calls to save lives. She also explained the process of buying an ambulance that is far different from buying a normal taxi to ferry people. “Ambulances is bought as a panel vans. They are then taken for conversion into an ambulance where specialized lifesaving equipment’s are installed. The ambulances are then turned into mini clinics so that they are able to provide first aid assistance to patients whilst enroute to health facilities. The ambulances must further be branded for identification purposes. Furthermore, they must be installed with security systems that will ensure that the ambulances are traceable”. Explained MEC Manzini.

MEC Manzini made a plea to the public not to abuse ambulances, ambulances are meant for emergency cases. The ambulances have been allocated throughout the province, Seven of the vehicles were allocated to Ehlanzeni District, Gert Sibande and Nkangala District received five ambulances each. MEC further applauded the Emergency Medical Services officials for working tirelessly in saving lives. The MEC closed by making a commitment to increase the fleet in the current financial year of 2019/2020.

New ambulances to improve response time and save more lives

The community health programme in the country have for a long time been unstructured and unregulated. The programme have been funded through non-governmental organisations, were not linked to any local government health facilities and the community health workers were not adequately trained. In June 2018, the Department of Health adopted a resolution (Resolution 1 of 2018) to standardize the Community Health Programme through remuneration of Community Health Workers (CHW’s) using the government persal system and a standardized training programme. Well trained and well paid community health workers can assist public health-care facilities to provide continuity of care for non-communicable diseases at community level (homes) outside of health facilities in communities. During April 2019, MEC Sasekani Manzini took time to visit all Community Health Workers in the province who are providing out of health-care services in all the districts of the province. During her visits MEC Manzini told all the Community Health Workers that the Department of Health value their services. “You are an integral part of our health system in Province. With your tireless efforts at times under difficult conditions the Department has noticed an increase in the access of primary health-care services by our people. “To show our appreciation the Department of Health has resolved to increase your stipend from R2 200 to R3 500 back paid from June 2018.”

Mpumalanga community health workers now part of the public health system
The Mpumalanga Taxi Council, Government and religious community gathered forces at Kanyamazane township outside the City of Mbombela on the 4th of July 2019 to petition in prayer against taxi violence, road carnage and youth substance abuse amongst others. The annual ceremony coordinated by the Taxi Council was graced by various dignitaries including the MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport, Honourable Gillion Mashego, the Chairperson of Mpumalanga Taxi Council, Mr Fanyana Sibanyoni as well as Pastor and radio personality, Pastor Negros Manna amongst others.

The occasion which started with a prayer session on Kamagugu road at one of the notorious accident spots where many lives have been lost, proceed to Kanyamazane stadium where MEC Mashego delivered a keynote address. The MEC urged the gathering to unite behind a common vision to combat social ills and seek divine intervention. “We should not be ashamed to surrender our human devises to God that we may gain a new perspective of our circumstances from Heaven’s point of view... There is no law neither policy nor strategy that can restore a depleted moral conscience unless one returns to God for spiritual revival. Today we acknowledge that our strength and wisdom are limited but God is the answer,” said MEC Mashego.

The Chairperson of Mpumalanga Taxi Council, Mr Fanyana Sibanyoni indicated that this is the third year since the annual prayer ceremony was introduced in 2017. He highlighted that the purpose of the prayer is to restore moral principles and combat social ills. “We are members of the community first before we are taxi owners therefore when our society is facing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, road fatalities and poor service delivery, we are all affected. We are tired of taxi violence which has left widows and orphans. However, we believe that God is the answer,” elaborated Mr Sibanyoni.

The rainy conditions could not dampen the mood of the Transport Inspectorate officials at Stinkhout Cost Centre, in the City of Mbombela, where MEC Gillion Mashego handed over nine brand new vehicles amounting to R2.2 million on 03 April 2019. This is due to escalating road fatalities encountered on daily basis especially on public transport hence the MEC resorted to beef up the Department’s Transport Inspectorate unit with the vehicles. This will assist intensify law enforcement operations in the interest of ensuring safety on the road for all road users.

MEC Mashego applauded the work performed by Transport Inspectors in ensuring full compliance with transport regulations. “The new vehicles will ensure that we are visible on the road. However, our focus must not only be on quantity but quality of vehicles in order to adequately conduct our operations. We should rather invest more on new vehicles than to waste money maintaining irreparable ones. Furthermore, I challenge you to change the narrative that says law enforcement officers are corrupt. We can achieve this by first taking care of state resources such as these vehicles and upscale our effort to make our roads safer for all road users. Our operations must also be intensified throughout the year, not only during the Festive and Easter seasons,” emphasized MEC.

The new vehicles will be distributed amongst the four districts and would go a long way in ensuring safety on public transport. Mr Mojalefa Tsotetsi, Transport Inspectorate Director, appreciated the efforts done by the MEC, “We are sincerely grateful for what the MEC has done. These vehicles will help us cover other areas which were becoming impossible to reach due to insufficient fleet,” said Mr Tsotetsi.
Youth Research to commemorate World Population Day 2019

Youth development is a priority area, government in its various spheres and tier, has prioritized. This is because the structure of the population, reveals the youthful nature of the population. The age groups, 19-24, 25-30, 31-35, forms part of the largest segment of the population. This requires government to focus its attention on youth development, in order to secure a brighter future for the country.

Young people today are faced with different and complex struggles, ones that if not properly addressed, threaten to decimate the entire generation of youth. The known social challenges afflict the youth more than the elder population because of the inactivity or the willing-away of this important segment of the population. Some of the known challenges confronting the youth include:

- Unemployment;
- Lack of skills;
- Substance Abuse;
- HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs);
- Lack of support for youth entrepreneurship; and
- Heightened levels of hopelessness.

Young people are dealing with one or more of these challenges at once and often succumb to the state of their psychology or negative mind-set that dictates to them that there are no solutions to the challenges they are facing.

It is against this backdrop that the department of Social Development, collaborated with the Bureau of Market Research (BMR) to host a research seminar to commemorate World Population 2019, focusing on disseminating various researches on youth development. The aim of this seminar was to keep youth development practitioners and policy-makers at large, abreast with the status quo as far as the youth is concerned. Various experts in the field of youth development, were invited to share information on some of the most pertinent issues afflicting the youth, today. Some of the papers presented included the following:

- Commercialisation & Sexual Exploitation of Children in South Africa;
- The state of Sexual Exploitation in Ehlazeni;
- Adolescent’s Knowledge, Attitude, & Perceptions towards Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights in Mpumalanga;
- Children & Young Women: Trends observed by Childline Mpumalanga;
- Perspective on Child Sexual Exploitation in Mpumalanga and;
- Turning Learners into Everyday heroes using social media.

Some of the major take-home messages from these papers were the following:

- the use of social media by the youth, especially school-going children, is rising and rising. The access to explicit contents remains a huge challenge and parents need to monitor this carefully;
- cyber addiction as mentioned above, has the potential to expose children to human/child trafficking, sexual predators and other negative activities taking place on internet;
- the laws have been tightened regarding Sexual Offences where sex with a person below the age of 16, is deemed a criminal offense, punishable by a court of law;
- a register of sexual offenders is kept; prospective employers are encouraged to peruse the register before hiring anyone to minimise exposing children and society to convicted sexual offenders;
- the investing in youth health, youth education and youth entrepreneurship is of paramount importance in reaping the demographic dividend, currently being experienced. The Demographic Dividend is “the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share of the population”. The Seminar was held on the 23 of July 2019 at the University of Mpumalanga. 80 people drawn from the cross-section of the employment sector, attended the seminar.

Redeeming communities from becoming bully and crime zones for children

The scourge of crimes committed by children and learner-on-learner violence in schools and communities is a cause for concern for the department. Children in conflict with the law has become a source of discomfort in families and communities in general. The department has introduced programmes informed by the Child Justice Act (Act no 75 of 2008) that are designed to avert the children from the criminal justice system.

The programmes amongst others include the assessment of children in conflict with the law, placement to diversion programmes and compulsory placement/sentencing to a Secure Care centre or Child and Youth Care Centre. The programmes are designed to develop the children in their capacity to deal with social ills such as anger management, low self-esteem, self-determination, peer pressure and career guidance.

Service providers in the field of Social crime prevention are accredited to provide Diversion Services and the programmes are also accredited to ensure that impact of those programmes are evaluated using a standardised framework.

The National Minister has put in place Provincial Quality Assurance teams that monitor the implementation of the Diversion programmes. These teams conduct the quality assurance and monitoring on a quarterly basis.

Mpumalanga has two Secure Care facilities or Child and youth care centers that provide services to children in conflict with law. The children in those facilities are placed or designated by courts where a court will issue an order stipulating the sentence of the child/example, child can be ordered to attend a Diversion programme for a specific period, or ordered to serve a sentence to a Secure Care centre/child and youth care centre/)

The department is also intensifying its prevention services or educational programmes in schools and communities. The educational programmes are aimed at creating awareness on parenting, consequences of crimes amongst children, drug abuse and other social ills.

For more information on services for children in conflict with law and those that are at risk of committing crimes contact the department on Tel: +27 (13) 766 3185
MEC Pat Ngomane responds to the people’s needs

Tabling his policy and budget speech for the Provincial Treasury, MEC Ngomane reiterated that his plans are in line with what the communities requested. The MEC said that the request, which was made to the Provincial Government, also includes the mandate of his Department of executing the financial policies. His plans includes amongst others, to improve financial governance and accountability through supporting departments, public entities and municipalities.

"The people of Mpumalanga want us to safeguard the integrity of the provincial resources and support all institutions to account properly on the use of public finances," said Ngomane.

"They expect us to provide quality technical support that enables the local government sphere to deliver services and meet its obligations to the society. He said he would ensure that his plans are aligned to the national economic policies. The 2019/20 plan responds to these expectations, and in particular, it focuses on capacity building and professionalization of the financial management officials in departments, entities and municipalities, MEC explains.

"We want to assure our people we are ready to play our role accordingly as enshrined in the PFMA, Treasury Regulations, MFMA and all other legislation governing Public Finances in our country," added MEC.

The 365 692 million for the 2019/20 financial year will be shared amongst its four programmes as follows;

Programme 1: Administration Programme allocated R108 895 million.
Programme 2: Sustainable Resources Management allocated R65 076 million.
Programme 3: Assets and Liabilities Programme allocated R159 928 million.
Programme 4: Financial Governance Programme allocated R31 793 million.

Young people lead the future

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government celebrated the Youth month at the Banquet Hall, Steve Tshwete Municipality, Nkangala District. The theme for this year’s Youth month is "25 Years of Democracy, a celebration of youth activism." Delivering her keynote address at the event, MEC for culture, sport & recreation, Ms Lindiwe Ntshalintshali encouraged the youth to be highly determined in developing their skills and to take charge of their future by empowering themselves with education.

She told the youth that government has programmes in place that are tailor made to support the youth including NFSAS and the NYDA. She also encouraged the youth to empower themselves with skills that matches with the economy of the Mpumalanga Province. "Empowering and giving support to the youth is our priority," she said.

At the event, the late Mr. Samuel Nzima's family attended the June 16 Celebration. The late Mr. Nzima is famous for the photograph of the young Mbuyisa Makhubu carrying a slumped and bleeding Hector Peterson away from the rioting crowd at the student protest, the Soweto Uprising on 16 June 1976.

The South African Actor, Producer, industrial theatre specialist, Motivational speaker, MC and Arts concept developer Mr. Presley Chweneyagaye also motivated young people to stay away from substance abuse and encouraged them to live a positive life, unleash their potential and empower themselves with education at the event.