

INHLABAMKHOSI



The year of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke: Growing youth employment for an inclusive and transformed society

This year marks 45 years since the June 16 1976 uprising in which many children lost their lives while standing up against a system that sought to strip them of their identity, and break their spirit.

Thousands of people traditionally flock to Youth Day commemorations around the country on June 16 to honor the youth of 1976 who stood up against the apartheid government and laid down their lives fighting for freedom and the right to equal education.

This year, because of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, the Mpumalanga Premier Ms. Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane delivered her keynote address virtually on June 16, she said that the theme for this year's commemoration is: "The year of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke: Growing youth employment for an inclusive

and transformed society".

Premier Mtshweni – Tsipane said that the current generation of young people is confronted by new challenges that are complex in nature and they include poverty, inequality unacceptably high levels of unemployment all in the midst of a complicated pandemic era. According to her, the recent quarterly labour force survey for the first quarter of 2021 released by Statistics South Africa paints a gloomy picture.

"It reflects an unemployment rate of roughly 63,3% amongst young people between the ages of 15-24 and an unemployment rate of 41,3% amongst young people between the ages of 25-34.

"In practical terms, the report reflects that there are approximately 7 242 000 unemployed

people in the country with a significant majority of these people being the youth. The scourge of unemployment is exacerbated by the advent of the Covid-19 crisis which has deepened the hardship experienced by the youth in our Province," she said.

The Mpumalanga Premier said that the empirical data and lessons learnt from the 2008 global financial crisis and the recent report of the International Monetary Fund on economic prospects of South Africa indicate that young people are more vulnerable to the decreasing demand for labour.

Whilst temporary initiatives such as the R350 Covid-19 relief grant played some role in shielding young people from some of the devastating impact of the pandemic, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the measure is

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not a sustainable long term solution to the challenges faced by young people.

Mpumalanga driven initiatives

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane mentioned that the challenges faced by the youth and the productive employment and decent work for young people cannot be achieved through fragmented and isolated interventions. Rather, she said that there must be sustained, determined, and concerted action by a wide range of actors. Thus, the consensus is that youth employment is a cross-cutting and high-priority issue that needs to be addressed within the framework of an interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder approach.

"We must take cognisance of our shared responsibility, as government, business, labour and civil society, to develop pathways for young people towards sustainable work streams. It is this responsibility that must direct all our efforts and all our energies," she said.

She said that South Africa has a youthful population made up of enthusiastic and energetic young people who could drive the social and economic prosperity of the country. Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the Mpumalanga Provincial Government took the following coordinating efforts to tackle youth unemployment in the province:

- The Mpumalanga Office of the Premier will continue to engage youth organisations such as the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the South African Youth Council (SAYC) in order to steer policy development and planning towards the promotion of young people's involvement in material economic activity across the Province.
- We have roped in a number of stakeholders from different spheres of government and

the private sector to establish the Provincial Youth Development Coordinating Forum (PYDCF). The PYDCF is a multi-sector platform made up of the private sector, public sector and civil society stakeholders tasked with dealing with the overall youth development agenda in the province.

- The PYCDF has been established to expedite the inclusion of young people across the Province in the mainstream economy. The PYCDF is established in recognition of the fact that there is no-one-size-fits-all solution to addressing the youth problem in Mpumalanga. All stakeholders need to come on board and work together to tackle the youth unemployment in the Province.
- We have put in place strategies and policies that encourages and bring youth into agricultural sector and also create champions for the improvement of other young people.
- As part of advancing our support to young people and through the Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund (MYDF), the Provincial Government shall provide a wide range of financial and non-financial support services to Mpumalanga youth owned businesses. The Fund will, amongst other things, prioritize SMMEs owned by historically marginalised groups of young people including, young women, young persons with disabilities and above all, youth residing in rural areas.
- An amount of 90 million rand will be invested in this programme in the current financial year. Additional support will be provided to young people without the requisite skills to develop bankable business plans but keen to establish businesses, to be capacitated through targeted mentoring, coaching and

training programmes.

"We are hoping to see more proposals that embraces new technologies and promotes artificial intelligence," she said.

Fight against COVID-19

The impact of Covid-19 has been much more catastrophic on the youth in the country. It has not only disrupted the flow of economic activity and their sources of livelihood, but disturbed their confidence and hope for upward social mobility.

As the country navigated the third wave of this global pandemic, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane urged the youth of Mpumalanga to remain central to government's initiatives to contain this pandemic.

"I call upon the youth of Mpumalanga to exercise maximum caution in light of increasing infection rates. I urge you all to discourage recreational social gatherings," she said.

Legacy of uMama Charlotte Maxeke

As the country celebrates the Youth Month in a year where the 150th commemoration of the birth of uMama Charlotte Maxeke is also celebrated, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane urged the youth to embrace collective and inclusive prosperity that puts young people at the forefront of economic development.

"We must not stand idle during the persecution of others. We must never rest while millions go to bed without a meal, while others do not have a roof over their heads and others do not have work," she said.

"The spirit of uMama Maxeke must never leave us. It must be central to our decision making process. Her values must inform the Mpumalanga we build or else we would have failed her gigantic legacy," she concluded.



Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane raising her clenched fist during the Freedom Day celebration at Balfor, Dipaleseng Municipality.

Mpumalanga celebrates 27th anniversary of freedom

Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane delivered her keynote address during the Freedom Day Celebrations at Balfour, Dipaleseng Municipality, Gert Sibande District.

Freedom Day commemorates the first democratic elections of 1994 in which all South Africans aged 18 years and older, regardless of race, could vote. This year was celebrated under the theme 'The year of Charlotte Maxeke: The meaning of freedom under COVID-19'.

Speaking during the commemoration, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said people of South Africa need to be free to celebrate the democracy they fought for, and urged them to remember an internationally renowned stalwart, Mama Charlotte Maxeke.

She said Mama Charlotte Maxeke made a very significant contribution to free disenfranchised

men and women in South Africa when it was not easy to do so.

"She overcame the impossible odds," said Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane encouraged women to continue leading the struggle against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and urged men to join in dismantling the systems that undermined and denied women the ability to fully utilize their basic human rights.

"It is upon us to fight gender based violence in our communities. There are men who are progressive, prepared to lead and champion the fight against GBV," she said.

In assisting in the development of sports in the district municipality, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane handed over sports equipment to local sports clubs.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane also officially

opened the Balfour Public Library, which she named after Charlotte Maxeke. The Charlotte Maxeke Library is a project of the provincial Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation in partnership with the national Department of Sports Arts and Culture.

She condemned the acts of destroying schools and libraries by learners and the members of the communities. She said that the acts were promoting vandalism and depriving other children and generations to come who need to utilise the resources for their personal development.

"These are precious resources in our communities. No matter how angry you are, do not destroy the library, if you destroy the library you will be destroying Charlotte Maxeke and the future of the generations to come," she concluded.



TAC member holding a placard demanding for TB to be treated as a health emergency.

Testing for TB: A Race against time

This year the South African Government commemorated the International TB day at Ehlanzeni District Municipality. Each year, World TB Day is commemorated on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic impact of tuberculosis (TB) and urge acceleration of efforts to end the global TB epidemic.

This year, the national theme for the commemoration of World TB Day 2021 is 'The Clock is Ticking: Let's Find, Treat and End TB Now!' the tagline is 'Unite to end TB in our Communities'. This is an earnest call to all South Africans to rally behind national efforts to end TB.

There is an urgent need to find, initiate and retain TB clients on treatment, as well as to regain those who have been lost-to-follow-up. Since every individual has a role to play in eliminating TB, the theme aims to promote mutual accountability between leaders and ordinary South Africans.

The country is not on track to meet its TB targets as outlined in the National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and STIs for the period 2017-2022. The advent of COVID-19 disrupted TB services and derailed TB programmes. The gains made in response to TB have been adversely compromised.

The local theme is aligned to the global theme, 'The Clock is Ticking', which conveys a message that the world is running out of time on the commitments made by world leaders to end TB. South Africa participated in the UN High-Level Meeting on TB (UN-HLM-TB) where a Political Declaration on TB was made by

world leaders reaffirming their commitment to end TB by the year 2030.

Despite significant progress over the last decades, TB continues to be the top infectious killer worldwide, claiming over 1,4 million per year. Drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) poses a major health threat and could put at risk gains made in efforts to end TB.

Mpumalanga Premier Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the Ehlanzeni District is one of the high TB burdened Districts in the Country.

"Following Ehlanzeni with TB burden in the province is Nkangala District with Gert Sibande being the less burdened of our 3 Districts," she said.

"In Mpumalanga alone, we have reported 12 933 positive cases of tuberculosis with 1 106 fatalities since 2018. This upward trend and increase in infections is a sobering reminder that we are gathered in a part of the world that is being ravaged by tuberculosis. This scourge has robbed families of loved ones, communities of its leaders and the Province of its future," she commented.

In response to this crisis, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the Mpumalanga Province has developed a result orientated strategy premised upon the following:

- Accelerating the reduction of TB infections through TB education and screening facilitated via the Cheka Impilo Wellness Campaign;
- Reducing morbidity and mortality by providing treatment and post treatment care at all Provincial health care facilities;

and

- Reaching all key and vulnerable populations with customised and targeted interventions across the Province.
- The use of Digital Chest X-ray machines in diagnosing TB.
- Procuring 22 double cab vehicles for TB management services and finding the missing TB clients at municipality level.
- Implementing the 90-90-90 strategy for TB. This is done by Screening 90% of our population for TB symptoms. Finding 90% of all TB clients and placing them on appropriate TB treatment and successfully treating at least 90% of those diagnosed with TB.
- Integrating TB screening during household visits for Covid-19 contacts screening.
- Conducting TB management trainings for Health care professionals, Traditional Health practitioners and Community Health workers.
- Procuring TB medication to successfully treat children and adults diagnosed with TB. And;
- Working collaboratively with District developmental partners, Private health care providers, National Health Laboratory services, NGOs and the mining sector.

"This strategy is in line with the National Strategic Plan (NSP) as developed by SANAC to reduce the overall TB infection rate across the country. It is this NSP that will afford us as Provinces, a platform through which we shall chart our collective response to this silent killer," she commented.



Deputy President of South Africa and Chairperson of the South African AIDS Council (SANAC) addressing TAC members during TB Day commemoration.

Meanwhile Deputy President of South Africa and chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), Mr David Mabuza, said that the commemoration of World TB Day is like no other in the recent past. He said that globally, almost all nations of the world are engulfed by the anguish and hardship of Covid-19 which continues to obliterate lives and livelihoods on an unprecedented scale.

"The whole world is grappling to adapt to the ravaging impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that we contain the spread of the disease and rebuild economies decimated by the disruption of trade and global supply chains. Over the past year, governments have had to respond to the overwhelming demands of Covid-19 on national health systems. The capacity, efficiency, and effectiveness of national health systems continue to be strained by waves of infections, hospitalisations, and deaths," he said. He outlined that the national lockdown and restrictions of movement contributed to the disruption of access to health services and the reduction in the number of TB detections as patient contact and tracing services became difficult during lockdown periods. According to Deputy President Mabuza, the World Health Organisation's 2020 Global TB Report outlines that the number of people treated for TB has grown since the 2018. He reported that the number of people provided with TB preventive treatment has quadrupled since 2015, from 1 million in 2015 to over 4 million in 2019. Deputy President Mabuza called upon all South Africans to rally behind national efforts to end TB and scale up the national response through urgently finding, initiating and retaining TB clients in treatment and care.

"We should also work hard to regain those who have fallen by the wayside. Each and every one of us has a role to play in the fight to end TB," he said.

According to Deputy President Mabuza, data from the recent TB Prevalence Survey, indicates that 390 000 people became infected with the virus in 2018, just a year after the launch of this National Strategic Plan. He reported that out of the estimated 390 000 people infected with TB, only 60% of them were diagnosed. He believes that there is a large number of people who are walking around with the infection but are not on treatment.

"That is dangerous considering that one person infected with TB could potentially infect a further 15 people," he commented. Deputy President Mabuza said through the 'Cheka Impilo' campaign in the province, government will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to regularly screen and test for TB at the nearest clinic so that they are initiated on treatment when they test positive.

"We are employing digital tools and platforms to raise community awareness and integrate TB and Covid-19 screening services", he said. He explained that a TB HealthCheck mobile application that allows individuals to screen for TB risk and symptoms in order to reduce transmissions, has been recently launched.

"This mobile application is designed to make self-screening easy and efficient, while also identifying individuals who need to get tested. It refers those who require a test to public health facilities for a free TB test. The system is integrated into HealthCheck, which is the Department of Health's Covid-19 digital self-assessment tool," he said. "More importantly, our TB response also prioritises communities in Districts with the high TB burden to ensure that we contain the spread of infections and turn the situation around. For instance, Ehlanzeni District, our host for this year's commemoration, is among the Districts with the high TB burden in South Africa and has been one of the hardest hit areas by the disease. We are all here today to underscore

the importance and urgency of the need to work with communities and all social partners in this District to ensure that we eliminate the spread of TB and save lives," he added. According to Deputy President Mabuza, the results of the latest TB prevalence survey report, TB prevalence is 1.6 times higher in men compared to women. He called upon all men across the country to be counted in the nation's efforts to end TB.

"Unless men heed this call, the well-being of South Africans will forever lie in the balance. Men must be encouraged to test for TB so that they get treated early before they spread the disease within their families and the entire community," he said.

On World TB Day, the Treatment Action Campaign also handed a memorandum to Deputy President Mabuza, calling on government to declare the disease a national health emergency. They called upon government to give TB the same priority as COVID-19.

Deputy President Mabuza promised the TAC to come back to the province and work together with the Department of Health to ensure that patients who visit the clinics are screened and tested for TB so that they are initiated on treatment when they test positive.

The Deputy President was joined by the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, Premier of Mpumalanga Province, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane

Deputy Ministers, Mayors, Deputy Chairperson of SANAC, Ms Steve Letsike, CEO of the SANAC Trust, Dr Thembisile Xulu, Representative of the World Health Organisation, Dr Owen Kaluwa, Representative of the US Mission to South Africa, Mr Todd Haskell, Representatives from business, labour, and broader civil society, Co-Programme Directors, MEC for Health Ms Sasekani Manzini.



Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane delivering a keynote address during the launch of the Oncology treatment centre in Witbank Tertiary Hospital.

Oncology treatment centre launched at the Witbank Tertiary Hospital

The Mpumalanga Premier Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane together with the MEC for Health Ms Sasekani Manzini, officially launched the Oncology treatment centre at the Witbank Tertiary Hospital.

The oncology treatment centre shall play a pivotal role in the early identification of cancer and end the long distance travelling of more than 500 cancer patients to other provinces.

During her keynote address at the Witbank Tertiary Hospital, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane stated that the prevalence of cancer within the Province and the lack of fit for purpose treatment facilities in the Province has been a cause for concern for some time.

According to her, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has, in its global cancer observatory report, identified low and middle income households in sub-Saharan Africa as reporting the highest rate of cancer diagnoses since 2018.

"Unless we develop strategies for effective treatment, cancer will progress to be a significant cause of morbidity and mortality in our country and in our Province," she commented.

According to Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane, statistics have revealed that one-third of cancer diagnoses can be effectively managed and ultimately negated through early identification as this results in shorter treatment time and improved prognosis.

"In instances wherein the cancer is identified at an advanced stage, this facility shall provide chemotherapy treatment with a facility that can accommodate up to 10 patients for chemotherapy only besides those that will be coming for pain management," she said.

"This is but one of the avenues through which we shall prioritise the treatment of cancer patients during the tenure of this Administration," she added.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane also mentioned that the health of people, especially in light of the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, is crucial for the socio-economic development of the Province.

She further mentioned that the opening of the oncology centre at the Rob Ferreira hospital in 2019 has lightened the load, although the Province still refers a disproportional amount of patients to either the Steve Biko Academic hospital or the Kalafong Hospital in Pretoria.

"This paints a very negative image about the quality of healthcare in our Province and places an unacceptably onerous obligation to travel on the patients.

This reality has heightened the need to establish an additional oncology unit within the Province," she said.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane also highlighted that Emalahleni has reported a total of 572 oncology patients since the beginning of the 2020/21 Financial Year. She said that this high number of patients necessitated the commissioning of an oncology unit within the Witbank tertiary hospital as a matter of urgency.

"In instances wherein the cancer is identified at an advanced stage, this facility shall provide chemotherapy treatment with a facility that can accommodate up to 10 patients for chemotherapy only besides those that will be coming for pain management," she said.

She also stated that government is also cognisant of the lack of oncology specialists

in the Public sector and promised that government shall continue to provide bursaries to medical students who are in the process of acquiring the necessary expertise in Russia and Cuba.

"Most of these students will ultimately specialize in oncology and shall be deployed to our oncology treatment centres.

This shall be supplemented by an aggressive drive to attract oncology specialists from the Private Sector," she said.

She thanked the progressive role played by academia, the private sector and NGOs.

She outlined that the expertise shared by the team from the University of the Witwatersrand's school of medicine, as well as the technical knowledge shared by the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) and other NGOs is evidence of the fact that the advancement of people can only be achieved through the multi-sectoral collaboration by the Public and Private Sector.

"We will continue to collaborate with the Private sector and academia to ensure that we strengthen the provision of oncology services across the Province," she said.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the launch of the Oncology treatment centre is a major development for the Witbank Tertiary Hospital and will see it become a centre of excellence for the provision of oncology treatment in the Province.

"This oncology treatment centre will ensure that patients diagnosed with cancer are attended to quicker. This will lead to a reduction in the average length of stay, quicker prognosis and eventually a decrease in morbidity and mortality attributable to cancer," she concluded.



Mkhombo Dam is one of the biggest water infrastructure facilities at Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality.

Mashilo calls for preservation of water resources

Human Settlements MEC in Mpumalanga, Mr Speedy Mashilo has urged municipalities to use their water resources optimally and give sense of collaborative responsibility with communities. Mashilo was giving a keynote address at the recently held Dr JS Moroka Water Summit attended by various stakeholders ranging from government, private sector, farming, traditional to community representatives. The municipality is one of the severely draught stricken and water scarce localities in the province. Adding to the woes, the municipality has had incidents of theft and vandalism of water infrastructure in the recent past.

"The municipality has over 200 boreholes and 30 operational water tankers to the service all affected villages, the question is how do we use and allocate these resources, we must therefore use these resources optimal", charged Mashilo. He added an earnest consideration for creation

of water catchment and harvesting Mkhombo Dam must be pursued to prevent loss of water. In dealing with vandalism the MEC has labelled these heinous incidents acts of sabotage and that the matter will be elevated to the level of the Provincial Commissioner.

These challenges in water engulf the municipality at these desperate times of COVID-19 pandemic, thus undermine the efforts to combat the spread of the virus. This was well noted in the address by the Executive Mayor of Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality, Cllr. Roda Sazi Mathabe who also bemoaned vandalism and invited communities to jealousy protect their infrastructure. "Vandalism of water infrastructure is rife in this locality, we therefore call upon communities to be responsible and protect their infrastructure", she said.

During the discussions, it transpired that community responsibility and collaboration as well communication must be strengthened to

ensure preservation of water. One community representative from ward 10, Mr Peter Shile urged that constant communication and awareness should be at the centre of dealing with vandalism and water deliveries. "Communication and community awareness are of critical importance if we were to deal with these challenges, delivery of water must be reliable, timeous and well communicated", charge Shile.

The summit recommended that all resolutions must not remain a token of lip service but be implemented. In view of illegal connections, management must devise a strategy of combating this trend as it burdens the municipality. Both the informal and formal businesses must be engaged further on water usage and preservation in their respective businesses. The summit also reflected on progress made since the last engagements of Water Indaba held in 2019.



Executive Mayor of Emakhazeni Local Municipality, Cllr Thomas Ngwenya and Culture, Sport and Recreation MEC Thandi Shongwe cut the ribbon at the opening of the refurbished Siyathuthuka Stadium.



(L) A community member works out at the outdoor gym. (R) Napoli FC and Young Madrid FC christen the artificial turf in an exhibition match.

Siyathuthuka scores refurbished stadium

An Artificial turf, an outdoor gym, a tennis court, multi-purpose courts (netball and basketball) and spruced up dressing rooms.

These are the new features of the refurbished Siyathuthuka Stadium in Emakhazeni Local Municipality, which was recently opened by Culture, Sport and Recreation MEC, Thandi Shongwe.

According to local sport authorities, the opening of the stadium is a catalyst for sport development in Siyathuthuka and surrounding areas as it means locals now have a quality facility right at their doorstep, which augurs well for the area to churn out top athletes in the coming years. At 2 100m above sea level,

Emakhazeni - formerly Belfast - it provides an ideal training ground for athletes. Over the years, it has attracted all kinds of athletes such as runners, cyclists and rugby players from the world over to prepare for major sporting events. The Siyathuthuka community now has facilities and nature on its side, which bodes well for the place to produce future stars, who will go on to fly the Mpumalanga flag high at national and international stages.

"Emakhazeni is a special place. Athletes from all over the world use it as a training base when preparing for big tournaments. The refurbished stadium is a shot in the arm for sport development and transformation,

especially tennis, netball and basketball. It means the days of local kids walking long distances to hone their sporting skills are over," says MEC Shongwe. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the stadium, the MEC urged the community to protect and guard the facility jealousy against vandalism to ensure that it stays in pristine condition.

Government, added the MEC, is using the outdoor gym to encourage a healthy lifestyle by keeping the community of Siyathuthuka active.

The facility can be booked on 013 253 7600.

Government on course to revitalise mining towns

Government is putting more focus in the development of communities in and around mining towns in Mpumalanga. Mining towns continue to attract employment hopefuls, thus critical to address surging needs of houses and the delivery of integrated human settlements. This is the position of Department of Human Settlements as articulated by MEC, Mr Speedy Mashilo during his recent visit to Govan Mbeki Local Municipality to assess progress on human settlements delivery in order to enjoin all role players to find lasting solutions to challenges gnawing the municipality.

The municipality is one of localities bedeviled by challenges of sewer spillage due to insufficient or depilating bulk infrastructure. Notwithstanding that fact, MEC Mashilo noted the work that the Department has done in addressing sewer spillages in the various areas. "We have completed our sewer spillage projects in both Leandra and Embalenhle, whilst at that we have already started with upgrading of Embalenhle Pump Station and the construction of bulk sewer outfall line in Kinross Extension 30", noted the MEC.

Whilst Local Executive Mayor Cllr. Nhlakanipho Zuma pleaded for more projects, he welcomed the intervention by the department and projects that are completed and currently underway. "We have a momentous task of addressing our infrastructure challenges. We are in need of more from the Department, we must however welcome the recent developments in addressing the spillages in our township", said Zuma. He also added that the municipality



Subsidised house beneficiary, Ms Mzizi Getrude Tabhile receiving her title deed from MEC Speedy Mashilo (R) and Executive Mayor, Cllr Nhlakanipho Zuma (L).

would work with the Department to quantify the number of incomplete houses.

Both principals also visited ongoing projects and handed over 891 title deeds to government subsidised houses beneficiaries from various parts of the municipality. Title deeds restore dignity, bestows security of tenure and sense of ownership, which also enables access to finance and overall socio-economic development of households. Among those who received title deeds are Sikhunana Ngodlwana (79) from Lebohang. To her delight, she quipped, "We are happy to have finally become

homeowners, our lives will surely change for the better".

The Department has allocated over R651 million since 2014/15 to 2021/22 financial years to deliver 2207 low cost housing units, servicing 3069 sites and the construction of 4558 informal settlements in various areas of Govan Mbeki as well as infrastructure projects. The MEC will continue with his road-show visiting municipalities across the province. The Department's new approach is to focus more on rapid release of land by servicing sites to enable people to buy and build for themselves.

Improving legislation to advance the rental sector

Property owners and landlords have expressed high level of optimism about improving business in the rental sector. This sense of buoyancy emanated from a two-day roadshow held in the City of Mbombela and eMalahleni Local Municipalities recently as the National and Provincial Departments of Human Settlements are soliciting inputs to improve the Rental Housing Regulations with stakeholders. The public information sessions were organized with the view to make amendments to properly regulate the relationship between tenants and landlords by ensuring that there is an amicable dispute resolution mechanism in the rental sector.

The Amended Act emphasises that the landlord must make sure that his or her property has the basic services water, electricity and proper sanitation. It also states that landlords and tenants must be educated with regards to their rights and obligations. Deputy Director Rental Housing Tribunal from the National Department, Mr Ronald Mukhombo, said that the Rental Tribunal must host roadshows to create more awareness on the programme and involve local municipalities since they are



Deputy Director for Rental Housing Tribunal from the National Department, Mr Ronald Mukhombo engaging stakeholders on the roadshows.

key in the space.

"I am pleased that we are addressing the Rental Housing Tribunal champion province in the country which makes our work much easier and the massive attendance and participation from the stakeholders". One of the agent from LA GRACE Properties, Ms Blessing Sunday welcomed the opportunity to discuss rental tribunal issues which the Department. She mentioned that this will be beneficial to many as compared to the problems they have encountered in the past

ranging from their fidelity funds certificates and improving relations tenants.

"We are grateful with the support we get from the Rental Tribunal making sure that both parties get the best solution. We encourage landlords and tenants in the Province to make use of these services provided by the department to be able to foster their relations without mistakes," said Ms Sunday. The tribunal provides its services freely and caters for Mpumalanga tenants and landlords.

Mukhombo urged that stakeholders must attend these information sessions so that they can be well versed with all they need to know in the rental sector. "We are still in consultation with other provinces for their inputs and the public so that we can firm up all inputs to come up with something suitable for all parties." The existence of the Rental Housing Act 50 of 1999 is an answer to all the challenges faced by both landlord and tenant. This legislation was passed by Parliament for landlords and tenants in terms of residential dwellings in each province. Similar roadshows are being carried in other provinces throughout the country.

SHEP to improve service delivery to farmers

Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs MEC Mr Mandla Msibi has reiterated the importance of agriculture in every individual's life, as he appreciated the national Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's decision to prioritize Mpumalanga for the launch of the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP) programme. MEC Msibi said SHEP will help mitigate challenges associated with farmers complaining about their produce that goes to waste due to market-related issues.

A Webinar held on April 12th, was addressed by Minister Thoko Didiza, who said other provinces will follow. According to the Minister, the SHEP programme is aimed at assisting smallholder producers to increase their income through improving their understanding of their market, and the demand for their produce. "Extension Officers and Agric Advisors should start doing their work differently, and start providing market information and commodity demands to farmers, so that our farmers know what to produce, and who to produce it for", said Minister Didiza.



Young learners encouraged to look after their pets



Clinical Services officials from the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs in the Nkangala District spent their Monday, May 17th with Grade 4 learners in Tweefontein, teaching them about taking care of pets like cats and dogs. The Phuthumani Primary School learners in Thembisile Hani Local Municipality were given tips on how best to play a part in looking after their pets, including taking them for vaccinations.

Dr Prudence Monareng, Dr Elisna Bosch from the Veterinary Services Chief Directorate were in the company of Vet student Henrikus Smit when they interacted with the learners during a Q&A session after an informative presentation on Five Animal Freedoms, which include:

- Freedom from Hunger & Thirst (don't feed pap & bones to dogs)
- Freedom to express normal behavior (give them freedom of movement)
- Freedom from Fear and Distress (show love and compassion)
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease (give medical attention when they are sick)
- Freedom from discomfort due to the environment (ensure they have proper shelter)

The learners, who were encouraged to consider Veterinary Services as a career, were also encouraged to report any sign of animal abuse they notice in their neighborhoods.