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The Mpumalanga Premier Ms. Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane received her Covid-19 jab at the Iraq taxi rank in Middleburg.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane takes the jab

The Mpumalanga Premier Ms. Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane received her Covid-19 jab at the Iraq taxi rank in Middleburg, Steve Tshwete Municipality.

Leading by example, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane got vaccinated in full view of the public. Her vaccination in public was meant to assure citizens that the vaccines were safe, and also to call upon the Mpumalanga citizens to shun conspiracy theories so that people can be psychologically ready and confident to vaccinate. This is also part of her programme that she developed to sensitise communities about the importance of Covid-19 vaccination, targeting mostly the grassroots population across the Province until herd immunity is realised.

"I just received my COVID-19 Vaccine! - the vaccine is safe and effective. I urge you all to get your jab," she said.

She also implored the taxi drivers, hawkers, commuters and individuals at the taxi rank to

lead from the front in mobilising their friends and families to get vaccinated against Covid-19 under Phase Three of the inoculation exercise. After receiving the Pfizer shot, she urged the Mpumalanga citizens to show that the country was united in fighting the corona virus pandemic by accepting the vaccination programme, so that the country can also return to normalcy.

"I therefore challenge all of us in our respective communities to accept the vaccination programme and to shun vaccine hesitancy, misinformation and the negative conspiracy theories," Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said.

"If you are vaccinated and happen to be infected with COVID-19, the virus will not suppress your immune system. But if you have not vaccinated, you can easily suffer complications that may lead to loss of life depending on the circumstances," Mtshweni-Tsipane encouraged the locals.

A local taxi driver felt encouraged by the Premier's initiative.

"You did very well Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane by setting up an example so that we are able to courageously follow suite. We will also inform our family members to vaccinate so that we can prevent problems that we could have avoided," he said.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane also monitored the vaccination sites at Eric Jiyane Hall, Sydney Choma Banquet hall and Lighuis Church. She expressed her satisfaction about the number of people who were vaccinated at the sites.

"I am very happy to see that people have come out in numbers to be vaccinated. Covid-19 is still a reality and let us therefore remain alert and keep adhering to the World Health Organisation guidelines of wearing masks, handwashing under running water, sanitisation, and also social distancing," said Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane.

She was accompanied by the MEC for Health, Ms Sasekani Manzini, the Acting Director-General, Mr Peter Nyoni and Health officials during the visit.



MEC for Community, Safety Security and Liaison, Vusi Shongwe



MEC for COGTA, Busi Shiba



MEC for Education, Bonakele Majuba

Editorial

The expansion of the vaccination sites to allow communities to take a jab speaks volumes of the Provincial Government's commitment to intensify the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. In light of the third wave, Mpumalanga has recorded a rise in the number of cases and fatalities. It is not all doom and gloom as we record recoveries. We have recovered recoveries. Let us continue to adhere to the safety protocols of washing, sanitising, social distancing and masking all the time.

The involvement of the private sector, partnering with government in this regard is a commendable life saving exercise. Sasol, for example, set aside two (2) days to allow the workforce of 8000 to be inoculated. EXXARO Mine in Middleburg and the forestry industry in Mkhondo followed suit, thereby encouraging their employees to take the jab, as Mpumalanga is on a drive to achieve the herd immunity. Government has to deal with the myths and conspiracy theories that seek to instil fear. By taking the jab publicly the Premier, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane and Members of the Executive Council, have boosted the vaccination programme with a much needed impetus to drive away the fear and misinformation.

Fighting HIV/AIDS should never take a back seat, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Any relapse in our fight will be detrimental to the lives of many people who are either infected or affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The recent meeting of the Mpumalanga Provincial Aids Council (MPAC), took a decisive step to use the District Development Model (DDM) approach to advance the fight. District Municipalities will now shoulder the responsibility of planning and budgeting for HIV/AIDS activities. This is a well-thought out approach, given that people that are affected by this scourge are residents within the Districts.

We welcome the newly appointed Director-General, Mr Makhukhu Mampuru in our shores. His appointment was endorsed by the Executive Council recently. He has earned his stripes as a reputable Public Administrator. This can be extracted from his extensive experience in the public service. EXCO viewed his strong research, planning, monitoring and evaluation knowledge as a perfect match for Mpumalanga, a province on a quest to economic recovery and growth. We look forward to Mr Makhukhu's guidance and leadership in this mammoth task.



Acting Director-General Mr Peter Nyoni taking his J&J job at SAFCOL, Amsterdam.

Acting Director-General, Mr Peter Nyoni takes his job publicly

The Acting Director General, Office of The Premier, Mr Peter Nyoni, waited until it was his turn in line to receive his Johnson & Johnson shot, which he publicly received during the inoculation campaign at SAFCOL, Amsterdam.

After taking his jab, he encouraged all men and women to take the exercise seriously.

"It is important that in this COVID-19 time we get vaccinated. That is the only way we can avoid being contaminated with the virus and that will also ensure good health and investment into the future," he said.

Nyoni highlighted that the government was concerned about a continued increase in COVID-19 cases in the Province.

"The nation is faced by an emergency situation which can turn out to be catastrophic if exigency measures are not taken to protect public servants from exposure to this infection. This decision, therefore, to encourage public servants and to motivate them is taken on a balance of scale to protect the lives in our nation and we want to encourage all our people to take up vaccination as one of the measures to control this contagion," he said.

Nyoni said if there are no plans in place to vaccinate public servants, their performance will be highly affected and service delivery can come to a standstill.

"We do not want that to happen, service delivery has to continue, we have to prepare for that and we cannot continue putting the lives of our employees at risk. So the right thing to do now is to formalise the situation at workplace, and ensure that all employees take their jabs so that we can have a healthy workforce," he commented.

Nyoni stated that the pandemic has created a crisis which has produced a number of unfortunate situations such as the economic recession, resulting in a number of people losing their jobs.

"It has exacerbated poverty, added deeper darkness in terms of the high level of unemployment that the country is experiencing, fuelled Gender Based Violence and has deepened inequalities in the country," he said.

He further commented that most unemployed people resorted to criminal activities because of the pandemic.

"Even the recent national protests are as a result of the pandemic which created anxiety and uncertainty amongst people," he commented.

Nyoni said the only way out to incrementally move towards overcoming these challenges is through the vaccination process.

"This will invest hope in our lives that there is a tomorrow," he concluded.



Mr Simon Baloyi Senior Vice President, Regional Operations and Assets Services Sasol inoculated during the Sasol vaccination drive.

Government and private collaboration is key to successful vaccination drive

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government collaborated with the private sector and led a successful vaccination drive at Sasol, Exxaro and SAFCOL (South African Forestry Company SOC Limited).

The vaccination campaigns which are interventions strategies of mitigating the impact of the virus within the communities displayed a heightened approach to health risk management around Covid-19.

During the vaccination campaigns, Mpumalanga Premier Ms. Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, was accompanied by MEC for Health Ms. Sasekani Manzini and some Members of the Executive Committee, Mayors and Councillors.

During the launch of all the campaigns, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane emphasised that the Covid-19 vaccine rollout is certainly going to require a continued spirit of co-operation among stakeholders, and will be the determining factor in reaching the country's vaccination targets.

"No one stakeholder can do it alone. It requires a collective effort and commitment to a common goal and greater good. This commitment is evident in how government and private-sector partners are banding and working together to get the job done," she said.

Launching the massive five-day COVID-19 vaccination drive at Sasol, Secunda, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane appreciated the collaboration that government is having with Sasol and applauded Sasol for always taking interests whenever there are multi-sectoral programmes that ought to be launched by the Provincial Government.

"Sasol always takes interests, not only locally but Sasol cares about what is happening in the entire Mpumalanga, and for that we will remain indebted," she said.

"Other stakeholders in the very same industries, they too have shown interest in partnering with the provincial government in making sure that their employees are vaccinated. We have since welcome that initiative that comes with responsibility and resources being put at the disposal of government to be utilised," she added.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane stated that the ultimate target for government is to have 65 percent herd immunity within the communities.

"With a high turnout at vaccination sites, we shall have curbed the spread of the virus, and there is a high possibility that we can revert back to our normal lives and live as normal, possibly having to take off our masks and going back to the normal ways of doing things,"

she explained.

Mr. Simon Baloyi, Senior Vice President Regional Operations and Assets Services, SASOL, who also took his jab during the launch, said that Sasol will do its best to ensure that all COVID-19 health and safety guidelines and protocols are observed throughout its maintenance shutdown.

"We believe in working together with the private and public sector to bring major change to our communities and to ensure herd immunity as more people get their vaccination," he said.

Meanwhile, during the launch of the Covid-19 vaccination rollout programme at Exxaro, Matla Coal Mine, Emalahleni, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane visited the vaccination centre and encouraged the employees who were vaccinating and told them that they have taken a good decision.

"Do not forget to encourage your families and friends. Let us also remember that if we have vaccinated, it does not mean that we must not wear masks and start holding parties because those are super spreader events. Let us continue observing the COVID-19 protocols so that we are able to win this fight against COVID-19 together," she said.

While visiting the Exxaro laboratory where the company is conducting its own testing through



Workers anticipating to receive their first Covid 19 vaccines doses.

its occupational health and safety strategy, she said that it was a good initiative which should be inculcated to other mines.

"It will to some extent assist us in testing so that immediate actions are taken to remedy the situation and manage COVID-19 amongst other employees," she said.

Exxaro Group Health and Safety Manager Dr Joseph Matjila said: "Our main motivation is to save lives. Preventing infection is part of our core health and safety strategy, but vaccination helps to reduce the risk of people who become infected developing severe symptoms and requiring hospitalisation. In countries that have seen large uptake of vaccination drives, there are fewer deaths and vaccines are effective in preventing severe cases of the disease".

The Premier also visited SAFCOL in Amsterdam, and monitored the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine program.

She said that the vaccine rollout programme led by SAFCOL, in partnership with the Mpumalanga Provincial Government, is aimed at ensuring that farmworkers are also

prioritised in ensuring that they get their jobs. She also said that the programme will enable farmworkers to invite their family members who stay in the remote areas where it is quite difficult for them to access healthcare services to reach to health facilities for assistance and to also access their job with ease.

"We came here to mobilise them within their easy reach where we can access them without them having to travel long distances. To us it is very important to keep them healthy because as we do that, that will not have a negative impact in terms of productivity," she explained. Mr. Sibalo Dlamini, Chief Operating Officer, SAFCOL, said the initiative was a very important milestone for the company.

"This is the right drive as an organisation that we are pushing, so that we make our employees healthy, contribute to productivity, promote more economic development in the area and job creation. This is the right thing because the healthier the workforce, the better the productivity," he said.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane stated that the

low turnout at the vaccination centres can also be affected by the reluctance of males in particular, who are still having more reservations pertaining to vaccination.

"We find it very difficult to convince them to go out and get their job. Some of them are scared, but after they receive their jobs, they get back to their senses and later feel that they are scared of nothing," she said.

She said that vaccinations alone will not turn the tide and that behaviour still has a major role to play. She pleaded with everyone to play their part by continuing to take precautions including social distancing, washing hands and wearing masks.

"We cannot and must not rest on our laurels. These individuals and collective efforts can, and must, supplement the country's vaccination efforts. Individuals and businesses should continue to play their part equally to avoid hospital capacity challenges. Containing the virus remains our priority, and should also be a personal and shared priority," she concluded.



Over 800 traffic law enforcement officers vaccinated in Mpumalanga

According to Chris Mabuza, Senior Traffic Official within the Transport Regulation, about 863 traffic officers have been vaccinated against COVID-19 so far in the province. This follows MEC Vusi Shongwe's call that traffic officers are directly interacting with many people in executing their duties.

The MEC says traffic officers should therefore, like SAPS members, be urgently prioritized as part of protecting them against the pandemic. MEC Shongwe spoke shortly after the provincial launch of SAPS Vaccination Programme that took place in July.

According to Mabuza, the targeted traffic officers include those within municipalities. The launch of the initiative, which took place in Middelburg, recently, was done in collaboration

with Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), the Department of Health and the municipalities.

Mabuza says the process of vaccination began first with the registration of officials in the Department and municipalities. He indicates that they faced some challenges in the process of the vaccination. He explains that these challenges were in the registration of officials that are attached to municipalities. About 1 361 officials were registered and forwarded to RTMC for uploading in the system of Department of Health. He indicates that vaccination sites were set up in all the regions in the Province, including the Mpumalanga Traffic Training College (MTTC) and Mbombela Stadium which were added

later. He further says vaccination of officials on the sites began on 27 July 2021 and ended on 30 July 2021.

"A delay was experienced in the correction of the wrong information. Some names, which were forwarded, could not be found in both the correct uploaded names and the incorrect list of names, which was sent back for correction. These challenges, however, did not impede the vaccination programme. We are happy that most of the members participated in this important programme," says Mabuza.

He also states that the Department of Health was also engaged regarding officials who registered and wanted to vaccinate but could not do so due to various reasons.

Hand over of state-of-the-art clinic and energy packs at Mjindini

Health care services are now at the doorstep of a community of about seventeen thousand people at Ward 17 at Umjindini, City of Mbombela Municipality. This after the construction of a R15,4 million state-of-the-art clinic by the Barberton Mines. The public/private partnership project started in 2015 and today marked the official hand over to the community by the Minister for Minerals Resources and Energy, Mr Gwede Mantashe, Mpumalanga Premier, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, Members of the Executive Council and Councillors from the City of Mbombela. Mr Mantashe appealed to the community to protect the clinic against vandalism. "From now on this clinic is your property and therefore you must protect it at all costs. Patients to be treated here are your goodselves, not government or Barberton Mines," Mr Mantashe explained.

His sentiments were echoed by the Premier, Ms Mtshweni-Tsipane and the Mine's Mr Jan Thirion. MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Vusi Mkhathshwa, who represented the Premier, told the audience that the clinic will contribute towards the attainment of quality health care as envisaged in the 7 key priorities of the 6th Administration. "It is only through a collaboration of government and the private sector such as this, that quality health care shall reach the length and breadth of our nation", he elaborated.

As the country intensifies the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the construction of the clinic is timely. It is earmarked to vaccinate the locals to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Meanwhile, three households were provided with energy starter packs. The houses are part of an electrification project in which 3000 were electrified at Umjindini by the Department of Minerals Resources and Energy.



Handover of the state of the art clinic and energy packs at Mjindini by the Mineral Resources and Energy Minister, Mr Gwede Mantashe and Mpumalanga Premier Ms Refilwe Mtshweni to the community.

Mpumalanga provincial government intensifies measures to fight HIV/AIDS pandemic

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government is putting measures in place to reduce the infection rate of HIV/AIDS. According to the Thembisa 4.4 Estimate model, Mpumalanga recorded a total of 746 915 total number of people living with HIV in 2020. A total of 18 473 new HIV infections were recorded in the same year. Most of these infections relate to adolescent girls and young women, aged 15 to 24 years. Seventy six thousand new infections were recorded last year.

These emerged during a virtual meeting of the Mpumalanga Provincial AIDS Council (MPAC), chaired by Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane. In attendance were MPAC members including MECs, Executive Mayors, Councillors Heads of Departments, Municipal Managers, Developmental Partners and Civil Society.

Mpumalanga has dropped from two (2) to four (4) amongst the provinces with a high prevalence of the pandemic. This drop has propelled the Provincial Government to stem the tide against HIV and AIDS until new HIV and TB infections are eliminated.

More focus will be on multisectoral



Mr Elphas Nkosi - MPAC Coordinator in the Province

collaboration with funding Agencies like US President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Global Fund, USAID, Civil Society, South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), Business Sector, House of Traditional Leaders and the community at large.

Mtshweni-Tsipane says the District and Local AIDS Councils are key structures for coordination of multisectoral response at a local and community levels. "We need to align MPAC to strategic deliverables with the District Development Model. This will require the District Councils to form a material part of the costing and budgeting for purposes of the Provincial Implementation Plan," the Premier said.

MPAC was launched in 2007 in response to the National Strategic Plan to stem the tide against HIV and AIDS. Mpumalanga was rated second then after KwaZulu-Natal in terms of HIV/AIDS prevalence countrywide. The Premier said the achievement of the proposed measures lie in the participation of all, through a multi-sectoral approach which involve the private sector, availing its resources and facilities. "We encourage all representatives to work together with us to ensure that the pandemic is defeated and that a developmental crisis of unimaginable proportions is averted," she said. The next sitting of the MPAC is scheduled for September this year, to assess progress.



Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane officially handing over the fully furnished house to 100 year-old gogo Julia Nkosi with MEC Speed Mashilo and Executive Mayor of Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, Cllr Dan Pitoli Nkosi appreciating the good work.

A century old Gogo gets new home

The society grounded on values and ethos of Ubuntu is the one that looks after its senior citizens. These sentiments were made by Mpumalanga Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane when she handed over a newly-built house to a 100 year-old gogo Julia Nkosi in Aremburg, Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality on August 26, 2021 as the province marked the closure of Women's Month celebrations following a string of events throughout the month.

The much loved and esteemed Gogo Nkosi received her house following a stringent call by the society after they had discovered her appalling living conditions and sought for an abrupt intervention from the Department of Human Settlements. Nkosi joyfully expressed her gratitude to all role players for making her wish of owning a pleasant house possible.

"It has always been gloom and dark especially for an aged woman like me to think of making all this possible on my own. I couldn't afford much but to survive with the little I have. I am grateful to everyone of you and may you continue to help others who are in a similar

situation like mine," expressed Nkosi who further appreciated all sponsors who donated furniture and groceries. Accompanying the Premier, the MEC for Human Settlements Mr Speed Mashilo thanked the community and the local leadership for their sterling efforts to help government identify areas of need for a swift response.

Gogo Nkosi has been living in somewhat a rundown shack for years while awaiting for her application for a government low cost house to be approved. However, the discontent of the community about her plight charged community members to impress upon the local councillor Ms Norah Nhlathathi that she intervenes to ensure that Nkosi's living conditions are improved; her rights to decent shelter and human living conditions are restored.

Both MEC Mashilo and Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane have since the beginning of the month been on the forefront of service delivery in conjunction with various stakeholders in the build sector who at many instances pledged to plough back to destitute households to

assist government to succeed the common goal of changing lives for the better. Some of the beneficiaries include 70-year old Gogo Martha Matjomane from Siyanqoba in eMalahleni.

This pensioner and widow resided in a delapidated shack with her two children and an adopted child at Tsietsi Informal Settlements, wherein access to basic services is a mirage and these conditions brought discomfort and posed health hazards to her. She led her life through odd jobs with financial instability. Mtshweni-Tsipane thanked the business community for their willingness to partner with government and bring meaningful impact in the lives of the less-fortunate: "This is a good example that certainly one good hand can reach to the other."

MEC Mashilo concluded part of his month long activities in KaHhoyi, Nkomazi Local Municipality where together with the Nelson Mandela and Collen Mashawana Foundations handed over two fully furnished houses one to Gogo Lucia Khoza (84) and an orphaned Penuel Singwane (20).