

ONLINE

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# Bophelong

WHERE THERE IS LIFE

EXTERNAL NEWSLETTER



## MEC DIEKETSENG

OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES OPERATION  
BOPHELO PELE IN ELIAS  
MOTSALEDI  
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## DEPARTMENT COMMEMORATES

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A long and healthy life for people in Limpopo.



LIMPOPO  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH





# MEC Dieketseng Mashego Officially Launches Operation Bophelo Pele in Elias Motsoaledi Municipality



**KGOBOKWANE:** Departmental employees heeded the call by the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) to donate blood to save lives, during a blood drive campaign held at the Provincial Head Office, on Thursday, the 12th September.

13 September 2024 — The Limpopo Department of Health's MEC, Dieketseng Mashego, today officially launched Operation Bophelo Pele, a provincial campaign aimed at strengthening primary healthcare services in rural communities.

The launch, held at Kgobokwane Sports Ground in the Elias Motsoaledi Municipality, drew a large crowd of local residents, healthcare professionals, and government officials who came together to witness the unveiling of this transformative health initiative.

Operation Bophelo Pele (which translates to "Health First") is designed to enhance access to essential healthcare







services, particularly in rural areas where healthcare infrastructure and resources are often limited.

The initiative prioritizes preventative healthcare, maternal and child health services, and chronic disease management. It also seeks to bring healthcare services closer to communities by deploying mobile clinics, conducting health screenings, and offering health education.

In her keynote address, MEC Mashego stressed the importance of improving primary healthcare in rural areas, where the burden of preventable diseases remains high. “Operation Bophelo Pele is about putting the health of our people first. This campaign is a call to action for all of us to work together to ensure that no one is left behind when it comes to accessing quality healthcare,” said Mashego.

The MEC highlighted that the initiative is in response to the challenges faced by rural communities, where access to healthcare services is often hindered by distance, lack of resources, and the shortage of medical personnel. “In Limpopo, the majority of our population lives in rural areas. For too long, these communities have struggled with inadequate healthcare services. Through Operation Bophelo Pele, we are committed to ensuring that every resident has access to the services they need, right at their doorstep,” she added.

As part of the event, health screenings were conducted

for the local community, with services ranging from blood pressure checks, diabetes testing, HIV counseling and testing, and screenings for chronic conditions. A live demonstration of these services was held to showcase the type of care that will be made available through the campaign.

Operation Bophelo Pele will also focus on health education, encouraging individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles and take a proactive approach to their own health. The campaign will address issues such as nutrition, physical activity, and the prevention of non-communicable diseases like diabetes and hypertension, which are prevalent in rural areas.

One of the key pillars of the campaign is maternal and child health. MEC Mashego noted that the Department is intensifying efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality by improving access to antenatal care, promoting immunizations, and offering family planning services.

“We are committed to safeguarding the health of our mothers and children. With Operation Bophelo Pele, we will ensure that every pregnant woman and every child in Limpopo receives the care they deserve,” Mashego stated.

Residents of Kgobokwane expressed their gratitude for the initiative, with many acknowledging that access to quality healthcare has long been a challenge in the area. “We are encouraged to see such a commitment to our health. We are grateful to the MEC and her team for bringing these services to us,” said one community member.

Operation Bophelo Pele is set to roll out across the province, with mobile clinics and healthcare teams traveling to remote areas to provide on-the-ground services. The campaign will be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and improving the health outcomes of rural communities.

MEC Mashego concluded her speech by urging communities to take ownership of their health and work with the Department to achieve the goals of the campaign. “Together, we can build a healthier Limpopo. Let us all commit to putting our health first,” she said.



# Limpopo Department of Health Marks Kidney Health Awareness Week: Promoting Early Detection and Healthy Lifestyles

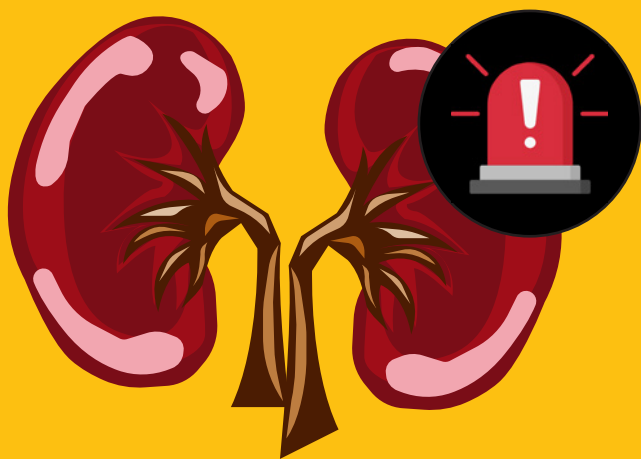


**P**OLOKWANE: September 2024 – The Limpopo Department of Health has officially launched Kidney Health Awareness Week, an annual campaign aimed at raising awareness about the importance of kidney health, preventing kidney disease, and encouraging early detection. Running from September 2-6, this year's theme is "Kidney Health for All: Ensuring Equitable Care Amidst Global Challenges", emphasizing the need for residents to take proactive steps in protecting their kidney health.

Kidney disease is a growing concern in South Africa, with thousands of people affected by

chronic kidney conditions every year. In Limpopo, the prevalence of kidney disease has been on the rise, largely driven by risk factors such as diabetes, hypertension, poor diet, and lack of regular health screenings.

Speaking at the beginning of the campaign, Limpopo MEC for Health, Miss Dieketseng Mashego, urged the public to take kidney health seriously, stating, "Kidney disease is often silent in its early stages, meaning many people are unaware that they are affected until the condition has advanced. This is why early detection through regular health check-ups is critical. By raising



awareness, we can help prevent unnecessary suffering and improve the quality of life for those at risk.”

### **Understanding Kidney Disease**

The kidneys play a crucial role in filtering waste and excess fluids from the blood, regulating blood pressure, and maintaining overall body balance. Kidney disease occurs when the kidneys lose their ability to function properly, leading to serious health complications such as kidney failure, heart disease, and even death.

In South Africa, chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a significant public health issue, with hypertension and diabetes being the leading causes. Limpopo’s rural communities, in particular, face higher risks due to limited access to healthcare services, unhealthy diets, and low awareness about kidney health.

According to official statistics, one in ten South Africans is at risk of developing kidney disease. However, many cases can be prevented or managed if detected early.

### **Early Detection and Prevention**

As part of Kidney Health Awareness Week, the Department of Health is focusing on educating the public about the importance of early detection. Residents are encouraged to visit their local clinics and healthcare facilities for kidney screenings, particularly those with high-risk factors such as:

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- A family history of kidney disease

Dr. Pheto Mangena, a nephrologist at Polokwane Provincial Hospital, emphasized that prevention

is the best strategy. “The earlier kidney disease is detected, the better the chances of slowing or even halting its progression. Simple blood and urine tests can reveal early signs of kidney problems, allowing for timely intervention.

Dr. Mangena also highlighted the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle to reduce the risk of kidney disease. “Eating a balanced diet, maintaining a healthy weight, staying active, avoiding excessive salt and alcohol, and staying hydrated are key habits that promote kidney health. Regular health check-ups are equally important, especially for those with underlying conditions like diabetes and hypertension.”

MEC Mashego stressed the department’s commitment to improving kidney health in Limpopo, particularly in underserved areas. “Our goal is to ensure that every person in Limpopo understands the importance of kidney health and has access to the resources and knowledge needed to protect themselves. By focusing on prevention and early detection, we can reduce the burden of kidney disease on our healthcare system and, more importantly, save lives.”

### **Spotlight on Dialysis and Transplantation**

For individuals with advanced kidney disease, dialysis and kidney transplantation are often the only options for survival. However, the availability of dialysis machines and the shortage of kidney donors remain challenges in the province.

The Department of Health is working on expanding access to dialysis treatment and raising awareness about the need for organ donors.

“As we focus on prevention, we must also address the needs of those who already suffer from kidney disease,” added MEC Mashego.

“We are working to increase the availability of dialysis services and encourage more people to become organ donors, as this can offer a new lease on life for those waiting for kidney transplants. Soon people from Vhembe and Mopani will dialyse at their backdoor as we anticipate opening the Tshildzini and Letaba Hospital dialysis units.”

The Limpopo Department of Health is calling on all residents to take charge of their kidney health during Kidney Health Awareness Week. With early detection, lifestyle changes, and timely medical intervention, kidney disease can be prevented or effectively managed. The department encourages everyone to participate in the awareness activities and to prioritize their health by getting regular kidney screenings.



# The Department believes **that Philemon's journey will inspire many**



**P**OLOKWANE: Limpopo Department of Health celebrates Mr. Philemon Selahla who has just graduated with a Master of Health Science in Emergency Medical Care from the Durban University of Technology.

This makes Mr Selahla a trailblazer as he becomes the first employee in Limpopo Emergency Medical Service (EMS) to acquire Master's degree especially in Emergency Medical Care.

Selahla says he began his career as a Basic Ambulance Assistant (BAA) and advanced by completing the Ambulance Emergency Assistant (AEA) and Critical Care Assistant (CCA) courses.

"Through the support of the Limpopo Department of Health's skills development programmes I was given an opportunity to pursue further studies and graduated with a Bachelor of Emergency Medical Care from the Durban University of Technology in 2020," shares Selahla.

His thirst for knowledge continued, and in early 2024, he further enhanced his qualifications by earning an Advanced Diploma in Health Management from the Central University of Technology (CUT).

As the acting Deputy Director of EMS Communications, Mr Selahla has an impressive 22 years of experience in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), covering communications, operations, and management to his name.

In addition, Selahla is also expresses his deep gratitude to the Limpopo Department of Health for their unwavering support, which enabled him to fulfil his dream of becoming an academic.

"I am proudly product of the Department's commitment to professional development, having risen from humble beginnings to achieving a prestigious master's qualification." He added.



# MEC Mashego Leads Health Screening Initiative at Thabina Primary School Amid Rising Bilharzia Cases



**THABINA:** 10 September 2024 – In response to the rise of bilharzia cases in the Greater Tzaneen area, MEC for Health, Dieketseng Mashego, visited Thabina Primary School this week, where she spearheaded a health screening and testing initiative for school learners.

This visit comes on the heels of 155 confirmed cases of bilharzia reported across various villages in the region, prompting urgent action to protect the health of local children.

Accompanying the MEC Mashego was senior officials from Health as well as the Department of Basic Education. The Limpopo Provincial Government has already set up a task team comprised of representatives from the Office of the Premier, Department of Basic Education, Department of Health and Cooperative Governance Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs.

The team led by MEC Mashego conducted screenings and tests for bilharzia, a parasitic disease that can lead to severe health complications if left untreated. The initiative aims to identify affected students early and provide them with the necessary treatment, while also raising awareness about prevention methods.

Addressing the learners and other community stakeholders at school, MEC Mashego stressed the importance of health screenings and education.

“Our coming here is to send a message that we cannot allow our children to suffer from preventable diseases because it is our responsibility to ensure that they are healthy and can focus on their education,” she stated.

“By identifying cases of bilharzia early, we can provide treatment and prevent further spread of the disease.”

MEC Mashego further stressed the importance of prevention. “We are working with the local water service authorities to conduct water quality tests as one way of preventing the disease because as much as screening, testing and treatment is important, it is even more important to work towards prevention,” says MEC Mashego.

Parents and community involvement has been flagged as an important aspect in dealing with the scourge. “Parents and guardians must meet us halfway by ensuring that our kids are protected. This can be achieved by ensuring that parents monitor children and ensure that they don’t come into contact with unclean water.”

The screening event is part of a larger campaign by the Limpopo Provincial Government of Health to tackle the prevalence of bilharzia in the Greater Tzaneen area. The campaign will extend to other villages and schools in the region, ensuring that as many children as possible receive the screenings and treatment they need.



# Department commemorates **Childhood Cancer Awareness Month**



**P OLOKWANE:** Health MEC Mme Dieketseng Mashego conveys a message of support to all the healthcare givers, particularly those that work at the Paediatric Oncology ward at Pietersburg hospital.

MEC's message comes at a time when the department commemorates the month of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month to raise awareness childhood cancer for children under the age of 15.

"The department is indebted to all the healthcare givers particularly those in paediatric wards for their continuous selfless commitments in ensuring our children receive the best possible treatments," says the MEC.

MEC Mashego encourages all the parent not to wait until long before they bring their children health facilities if they (parents) suspect their children might have contacted any illness.

"As the department we cannot sit and look away as most of our children die from different kinds of cancer because of late diagnosis that comes from lack of knowledge by their parents about early warning signs of cancer.

"Fortunately, it is scientifically proven that with early

detection and treatment the survival rate can be between 70% and 80 percent." MEC Mashego adds.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the five foremost childhood cancers that are found in South Africa include, Leukaemia, Lymphoma (tumours that begin in the lymph glands), Brain tumours, Nephroblastomas or Wilms tumours – cancer of the kidneys and soft tissue sarcomas (tumours that begin in the connective tissue)

Meanwhile, Dr Vhutshilo Netshituni the Head of Clinical Unit for Paediatric Oncology at Pietersburg hospital together with her team, developed and implemented a customised provincial programme to raise awareness about the early warning signs of childhood cancer, using an effective method to aid early detection, better known as SILUAN.

In addition, the department also introduced the concept of Nurse Paediatric Oncology Champions (POC) throughout all the districts across Limpopo province.

The POCs will during this Childhood Cancer awareness month embark in an outreach across the province to ensure children with childhood cancers are diagnosed early and put on ongoing treatment at Pietersburg hospital.

"We encourage all sectors, communities and individuals to join hands with the Department by learning the early warning signs (SILUAN) because this will contribute immensely to save the lives of our precious future." Dr Netshituni pleads.





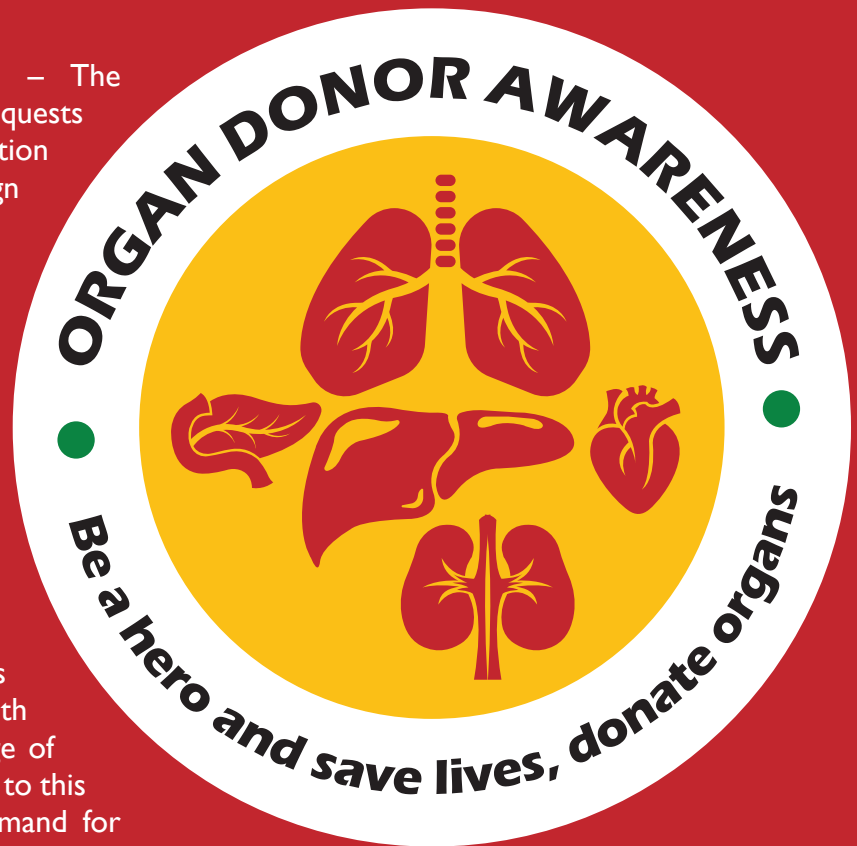
# Limpopo Department of Health Intensifies Organ Donor Awareness Campaign

**P**OLOKWANE: September 2024 – The Limpopo Department of Health requests the public to embrace organ donation as part of the Organ Donor Awareness Campaign aimed at educating the public about the life-saving benefits of organ donation and encouraging residents to register as organ donors. The campaign, which is part of the department's broader health awareness initiatives, seeks to address the urgent need for organ transplants in the province.

Organ donation is a critical medical procedure that involves the transfer of healthy organs from a donor to a recipient in need. In South Africa, thousands of people are on the waiting list for organs such as kidneys, hearts, livers, and lungs, with many waiting for years due to the shortage of registered donors. Limpopo is no exception to this crisis, as the province faces a growing demand for organ transplants.

**The Need for Organ Donation in Limpopo:** According to statistics from the Department of Health, over 4,300 South Africans are currently waiting for organ transplants, but only a fraction of that number receive the necessary organs each year. In Limpopo, the need is particularly pressing, as the province continues to battle rising cases of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, which often lead to organ failure.

Limpopo MEC for Health, Miss Dieketseng Mashego, emphasized the importance of organ donation in saving lives, saying, "We have many people in our communities who are in desperate need of organ transplants. By raising awareness and encouraging more people to become donors, we can give the gift



of life to those in need. Organ donation is a selfless act that has the power to transform not only the life of the recipient but also the lives of their families."

**Myths and Misconceptions:** Despite the need for donors, there remains widespread hesitation around organ donation, often due to misconceptions and cultural beliefs. The Limpopo Department of Health aims to dispel these myths and provide accurate information about the organ donation process.

"We are aware that many people are unsure or fearful about organ donation, largely due to a lack of understanding," MEC Mashego explained. "Part of our campaign will focus on educating the public



consider becoming donors. “One person can save up to seven lives through organ donation. This is a profound way to make a lasting impact on the lives of others. By simply registering as a donor, you can give hope to those who are suffering from life-threatening conditions.”

about the safety, dignity, and ethical practices involved in organ donation. It is a voluntary process that does not interfere with traditional burial practices, and donors are treated with the utmost respect.”

Becoming an Organ Donor: Registering as an organ donor is a straightforward process. Individuals can sign up online through the Organ Donor Foundation or by visiting their nearest healthcare facility to receive more information. Once registered, an organ donor card is issued, and the decision can be communicated to family members to ensure their wishes are known.

The MEC encourages all Limpopo residents to



The Organ Donor Awareness Campaign marks a crucial step in addressing the urgent need for organ donors in Limpopo. By increasing public understanding and encouraging donor registration, the Limpopo Department of Health is committed to saving lives and giving hope to those waiting for organ transplants. For more information on how to become an organ donor, visit the department’s website or contact your nearest healthcare facility.





# MEC Dieketseng Mashego brightens the faces of the young ones during her birthday celebration



**SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT:** MEC for Health Dieketseng Mashego marked her birthday, (17 September) in a heart-warming celebration with the children of Wunderkin Child Care Academy in Sekhukhune District.

In a remarkable gesture of community service, the MEC dedicated her special day to giving back and investing in the future of South Africa.

Emphasizing the importance of nurturing the next generation, MEC Mashego stated, "For a successful nation, you prepare for your future today." Her visit highlighted a commitment to fostering development and supporting local youth through tangible contributions.

During the celebration, MEC Mashego generously donated essential items including chairs and tables, educational toys, outdoor playing facilities, and training equipment for both children and elders.

These contributions aim to create a more enriching environment for the children at the academy,

promoting both learning and play.

"This donation is a gesture of love and affection towards our children," Mashego expressed. "It is vital that we nurture them while they are still young, as they will grow wise and become the leaders of tomorrow."

The event was met with joy and excitement from the children and staff alike, reinforcing the notion that community support plays a crucial role in the development of young minds. Hon. Dieketseng Mashego's birthday celebration serves as an inspiring reminder of the impact one individual can make in the lives of many.

As the day unfolded, it became clear that the true gift of the occasion was not just the donations made, but the time spent with the children, filled with laughter and learning.

Through such initiatives, MEC Mashego continues to pave the way for a brighter future, emphasizing the importance of investing in the youth today for a prosperous tomorrow.

# Ria Ledwaba extends her helping hand to Kgapane hospital patients



## Derick Kganyago

**KGAPANE HOSPITAL:** The former vice-President of the South African Football Association and owner of now defunct Ria Stars FC, Mme Ria Ledwaba continues to give back to the community of Limpopo following 900 blankets she donated recently donated to patients at Kgapane hospital.

During her speech Mme Ledwaba emphasized on the importance of giving back to the community and said, “blessed is the hand that gives than the one that receives”

As female football administrator Ledwaba says the donation is one of its kind because both patients and the vulnerable will always have a special space in her heart.

“This was done in line with the words of wisdom of the 35th United States President John F Kennedy whose inaugural address inspired children and adults to see the importance of civic action and public service”

“I’m inspired by his historic words when he said, ‘ask not what your country can do for you,’ but what you can do for your country instead,” says Ledwaba

Ledwaba states she started with the blankets campaign three years ago and to date over 2 300 community members have already benefitted.

“It was one step at time during the Covid-19 crisis with only 100 blankets back in 2022 after we went on social media asking for support from the public and by 2023, we were able to distribute 1375 blankets,” said Ledwaba.

In addition, Ledwaba says her foundation (Ria Ledwaba Foundation) aims at making the differences in the lives of the South Africans by unlocking the potential of the young men and women’s dreams through sport and education.

“Our vision is to help talented players in rural area to reach their potential. We also adopted orphans that we assist yearly with school uniforms.” Ledwaba adds.



# Road Accident Funds (RAF) refurbishes three units at Mokopane Hospital



## Mokgabo Matloa

**MOKOPANE HOSPITAL:** Recent collaborative effort between the Road Accident Fund (RAF) and Limpopo Department of Health yielded positive outcome. This after Raf handed-over refurbished rehabilitation, accident, and emergency units at Mokopane regional hospital, Waterberg district.

When receiving the refurbished units Health MEC, Mme Dieketseng Mashego, expressed her gratitude RAF and says the collaboration will positively contribute towards intensifying the provision of better healthcare service in the province.

“As the department we are grateful and regard this as a milestone towards a sustainable Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in support of our efforts to provide quality care to our patients.

“This refurbishment, indeed, bears a testament to the power of collaboration between Government and other key role stakeholders towards improving healthcare services and road safety in the province.” MEC said.

Meanwhile, RAF's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mr. Collins Letsoalo says his organisation remains committed to support all the road accident victims through strengthening of the public healthcare facilities. “This project demonstrates our dedication to making a positive impact in the communities we serve”

In additionally Ms Lorraine Francois, Chairperson for RAF also shared with the attendances that RAF through its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives aims to improve the healthcare services and road safety across the borders of South Africa. “We recognises road accidents have a devastating impact on families and communities, and our CSR initiatives aim to mitigate this impact by providing support and resources where they are needed most,” she added.





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