



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF  
**CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE,  
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS & TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS**

## **COGHSTA MEC RB Makamu Media Statement on the 2023 Initiation Schools Season State of Readiness**

**For immediate release  
15 June 2023**

Limpopo is ready and geared for a death-free initiation season.

However, it is important to acknowledge that we meet here today a year after we hosted one of the most challenging initiation seasons for our province.

The year 2022 saw higher numbers of young boys and girls in line to participate in this important traditional rite of passage in their lives as a result of the COVID19 backlog.

Due to the almost doubled amount of initiation school applications that we received and approved, as the department of COGHSTA and all our stakeholders, we have adjusted our administrative and enforcement capabilities to ensure that the lives of our children are kept safe.

As such, it is important for me to thank my colleague, MEC for Health, DR Phophi Ramathuba (in her absence), The Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders led by Hosi Pheni Ngove, the PICC as led by Hosi Mudavula Chauke and Kgoshi Boleu Rammupudu, our Provincial SAPS led by Lieutenant General Hadebe, the media and the community at large for assisting us in ensuring that the 2022 season takes place under the legal frameworks of customary initiations.

I'm joined in this briefing by our stakeholders, including the NPA represented by Advocate Tshwane.

This, for us, is a demonstration of the unique approach that Limpopo takes towards hosting this important tradition. It is what sets us apart and ensures a strict initiation season.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the 2023 Initiation Schools Season is at hand. It will begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, and while we anticipate that many initiates will be admitted on the opening, we are aware more will be joining them as the Department of Education's academic calendar closes for the quarter on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The Customary Initiation Act No. 2 of 2021, provides a framework for the management of initiations in the country.

In compliance with this Act, the Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committee (PICC), led by Hosi Mudavula Chauke and Kgosi Boleu Rammupudu, was established and mandated to scrutinize, adjudicate applications, and advise the Premier accordingly.

This cultural practice gives us a sense of pride and makes our culture unique and set apart. As we execute this cultural practice, role players such as the Department of Health, The Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committee, SAPS, the NPA, Traditional Surgeons and Traditional Care-givers, Communities and Family members are called upon to join hands with us.

You are all important in ensuring that we live up to our perpetual commitment of protecting the lives and dignity of our initiates as set out in the Constitution.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have stressed and will continue to emphasize the terms of Section 2 (1) of the Northern Province Circumcision Schools Act No. 6 of 1996, which continues to guide the work on initiation schools in our province.

Among others, the act states that:

- **No person** shall hold an initiation school **without a valid permit** issued to him/her;
- **No traditional surgeon or any other person** is allowed to perform rituals in an initiation school **without a certificate of fitness** issued for that purpose by a registered medical practitioner authorized by the Premier or authorized officer to do so in terms of Section 3 (1) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003;
- **No person below the age of twelve** can be admitted to an initiation school in terms of Section 7(1) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003; and
- **No person** is allowed to **abduct another** for the purpose of taking the abducted person to an initiation school in terms of Section 9(1) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003.

This year the initiation school program will commence on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, and is scheduled to end on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July. The number of initiation school applications **RECEIVED** has declined to a total of 644 as compared to last year's 680. From this grand total 587 have been approved, 328 of which are male and 259 are female initiation schools.

**The breakdown for these applications per district is as follows:**

**Sekhukhune District**

Sekhukhune District again has the highest number of applications at a total of 326. Of this number, only 285 have been approved.

**Capricorn District**

The Capricorn District is second, with a total of 134 applications, with 127 being approved.

**Waterberg District**

The Waterberg district had 84 applications, and all 84 were approved.

**Mopani District**

In the Mopani District, a total of 60 applications were received, and 51 were approved.

## **Vhembe District**

In the Vhembe District, we received 40 applications to hold initiation schools were received, all of them were approved.

The work of the PICC has been crucial in making sure that this initiation season takes place with absolute reverence to the sanctity of this important tradition, and the safeguarding of the innocent lives entrusted to the different schools.

A lot of work has already gone in to supporting the initiation schools already approved. Just last week the Department of COGHSTA, the Department of Health, the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders and the PICC held a workshop with traditional leaders and permit holders in preparation for the season.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to remind initiation schools permit holders, parents and residents of Limpopo that the Limpopo Provincial Initiation Schools Act (6 of 1996) reads – **No child under the age of 12 years must be admitted to an initiation school for initiation.** It also dictates that **no permit holder may admit a minor to an initiation school without his parents or legal guardian’s written consent in the prescribed format.**

We want to encourage parents, traditional councils and the PICC to pay special attention in ensuring that this age limit and procedure is strictly adhered to. We unfortunately continue to be plagued by illegal schools in the province.

This is an issue we take very seriously, and as such, our department continues to work closely with our SAPS colleagues to ensure that these are shut down as soon as they are reported.

We will spare no efforts in ensuring that the lives of initiates are protected. However, we want to appeal to parents to authenticate the legitimacy of initiation schools they intend to send their children to, with their respective Traditional Authorities.

There will be zero tolerance for people who want to take chances by running initiation schools without permits.

As we have done in the past, we will be working with our law enforcement agencies to prevent any unnecessary loss of young lives and also to ensure that the rights of these young boys and girls are not violated.

Once more, let me take this opportunity to thank you as members of the media for your positive response to this media briefing on the 2023 Initiation Schools Season. Your constant support and partnership in working with us to ensure a death free initiation school program is highly valued and appreciated.

I thank you.

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