



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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

MEC Basikopo Makamu Media Statement on The 2022 Initiation Schools Season State of Readiness

For immediate release

22 June 2022

It is a great honor for me to be in your midst as we meet physically today after a very long and challenging time, not only in our province and nation, but worldwide. The unenviable imposition by the deadly Coronavirus and our government's swift strategies to save millions of souls has resulted in us being limited to engage in many events that had become pivotal in our lives.

I would be wasteful of me if I do not begin this briefing by reserving a word of honour and gratitude to his excellency President of the Republic of South Africa Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, our honourable Premier Chupu Stanley Mathabatha, our esteemed MEC for Health in Limpopo Dr Phophi Ramathuba (who joins us today) and our brave and selfless health workers, who toiled heavily to ensure that we are all still breathing today. It is their works of gallant service that have ensured that we are able to arrive at a point in our province where we can hold the 2022 Initiation Season, and hold it safely.

In the same breath, we thank the outgoing leadership of the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders and its Executive Committee led by Kgoši Malesela Dikgale for being visionary, and doing all to maintain a balance between saving lives and promoting our cultural practices.

As I mentioned, in this Media Briefing today as always, we are joined by my Colleague in the Executive Council, MEC for Health, Dr Phophi Ramathuba and the Mopani SAPS Regional Commissioner, Major General Willy Mashava. These are Leaders of the important Stakeholders during the Initiation Schools Season, and their contributions are indispensable.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the 2022 Initiation Schools Season is upon us. It began on the 17th of June, and while we have already accounted for many initiates at Initiation Schools across the province, we are aware more will be joining them as the Department of Education's academic calendar closes for the quarter on Friday the 24th.

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 Chauke SE and Kgosi Rammupudu BH, was established and mandated to scrutinize, adjudicate applications, and advise the Premier accordingly.

This initiation season is a peculiar one, specifically because of the two-year postponement. There has been justified anticipation and therefore higher numbers of young boys and girls in line to participate in this important traditional rite step in their lives.

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 Health Department, The Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committee, SAPS, Traditional Surgeons and Traditional Care-givers, Community 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 to remind ourselves of 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 commenced on the 17th of June, and is scheduled to end on the 23rd July. The number of initiation school applications **RECEIVED** has almost doubled from a total of 393 in 2019 to 731 this year. Out of this number, 485 are for males and 246 females. From the grand total of 731 applications received, 680 have been approved.

The breakdown for these applications per district is as follows:

Sekhukhune District

Sekhukhune again has the highest number applications which are 500, made up of 298 males and 202 female initiation schools. Of this number, 276 male schools and 182 female school applications were approved.

Waterberg District

The Waterberg district had 54 applications; 29 male schools and 25 for females. All were approved.

Capricorn District

In the Capricorn District, a total of 53 applications were received, 34 for male and 19 female initiation schools. Of this number, only 29 male and 17 female applications were approved.

Mopani District

A total of 89 applications were received, All were for male initiation schools. Of these, 87 received approvals.

Vhembe District

In the Vhembe District, we received 35 applications to hold initiation schools, all these were for male schools and none were disapproved.

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 in the final days of the month of May, the PICC visited the five districts to engage with Senior Traditional Leaders, Traditional Surgeons and care givers to address their challenges before the commencement of the season.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the beginning of the season last week, we can report that three initiates in the Mopani District had been taken to the Maphuta Malatji Hospital due to complications over the weekend. All three initiates have been discharged.

An initiate in the Sekhukhune region was taken to the Middleburg Hospital, then transferred to the Polokwane Provincial Hospital. The initiate is going to be discharged today.

In some of these instances we have found that there was an initiation school that had admitted an initiate under the age of 12.

I wish to remind initiation schools 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 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 had a lengthy engagement with the Provincial Police yesterday to close all the gaps these illegal schools want to use at the expense of young people. Unfortunately, our officials have recorded 29 illegal schools in the Sekhukhune district, with one death of a male initiate reported in May.

As of this morning we received an alert from National Department of COGTA indicating that there are thirteen (13) male children who have been abducted from Daveyton (GP) to Dennilton to undergo initiation school. In all these cases we are working closely with the police to assist us.

We are sparring 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 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 further unnecessary loss of young lives and also to ensure that the rights of this 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 2022 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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