



MEC Basikopo Makamu Media Statement on 2019 Initiation Schools Season Readiness

For immediate release

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It's a great honor for me today to be in your midst as we meet during the new dawn of our new 6th administration of government in our 25 years of democracy. The President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa has announced the new National Executive and Cabinet and the Premier of the Province of Limpopo, Mr. Chupu Stanley Mathabatha has also announced the Executive Council to put all systems of governance in place. In short, the ducks are in row.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me also extend my word of gratitude as we congratulate and welcome our new Minister for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) Dr. Nkosozana Dlamini-Zuma and the two Deputy Ministers: Mr Obed Bapela and Mr Parks Tau. We continue to pride ourselves as Limpopo because we are and shall remain a shining example of good cultural initiation practice where traditional leaders take the lead and responsibility to promote accountability.

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 Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi Malesela Dikgale. The two as you all know, are the Leaders of the most important Stakeholders during the Initiation Schools Season.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the 2019 Initiation Schools Season is at our door step. Preparations are underway for our young boys and girls to enter the right of passage

from boyhood and girlhood to manhood and womanhood. The season will see many young men and women from different backgrounds and all walks of life taking an important traditional rite step in their lives. This cultural practice is one of the many practices that define who we are as Africans. It is a major and sacred stage in the African culture which sees the transition from childhood to adulthood. It gives us a sense of pride and makes our culture unique and meticulous. As we execute these cultural practice all role players such as the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders, Limpopo Initiation Schools Committee, government departments like Health and SAPS, Traditional Surgeons and Traditional Care-givers, Community and Family members play a very important role. We do this to reaffirm our commitment to a Death-free Initiation School Season as we have done in the past.

From a Holy Bible perspective in Genesis 17:9-27, a rite to circumcision is part of God's promise to Abrahamic Covenant. We believe and maintain that circumcision is, open quote "A sign of an ever-lasting Covenant" with God. God said further to Abraham, open quote "Now as for you, you shall keep my covenant, which between me and you and your descendants after you every male among you shall be circumcised." close quote. As role players in the Initiation Schools value chain, we are indeed keeping this Covenant.

In the same breadth 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. The act states the following regarding initiation schools:

- No person shall hold an initiation school without a valid permit issued to him/her in terms;
- 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 traditional nurse or any other person is allowed to look after initiates in an initiation school without a certificate of attendance of training referred to in regulation 5, provided that the prohibition shall become effective on the day immediately after the conclusion of the training concerned in terms on Section 4(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;
- No initiate shall be admitted to an initiation school more than five days after the commencement of the school in terms of Section 7(3) 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 initiation school program is scheduled to commence from the 07th of June and end on the 14th July 2019. We received a total of 393 applications to open initiation schools. Out of this number, 238 are for male's initiation and 155 are for female's initiation schools.

The breakdown for these applications per district is as follows:

Capricorn District

A total of 78 applications were received, 43 males and 35 females initiation schools. All of them complied and were duly approved.

Mopani District

A total of 55 applications were received, 52 for males and 3 for females. Of these applications, 22 males and 3 females' initiation schools were approved. The other 25 applications were declined and reasons for declining were communicated to the respective applicants.

Sekhukhune District

Sekhukhune has the highest number applications which are 188 of which 97 are male and 91 female initiation schools. Of this number, 78 male schools and 71 female initiation school applications were approved and 36 (19 males and 17 females) were as well declined with reasons.

Vhembe District

The district had 20 applications for male initiation schools and all were approved.

Waterberg District

Waterberg district had 52 applications; 26 males and 26 for females. All were also approved.

From the 393 applications received to run initiation schools, the required documents which were expected to accompany all applications were:

- A letter from the Traditional Council of the area at which the initiation schools will take place, supporting the application;
- A certificate of fitness of the traditional surgeon issued by a medical doctor;
- An environmental report compiled by Environmental Practitioner for the area at which the Initiation School will take place;
- A copy of proclamation and/or title deed confirming authority and/or jurisdiction over the area at which the Initiation School is to be conducted; and
- An undertaking signed by the Senior Traditional Leader regarding acceptance of accountability for the Initiation School

The Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders assisted with conducting a workshop for all Senior Traditional Leaders and Traditional Surgeons who have been given permits to host these Initiation Schools two weeks back at Bolivia Lodge. Central and of cardinal importance in having conducted this workshop was to brief and prepare the initiation

schools stakeholders on precautionary measures to be followed in order to have a smooth process during the initiation school period.

With all these efforts, we would like to maintain an impressive record of running initiation schools. Traditional leadership at all levels in the province has institutionalized the practice with effective governance systems. We want to commend all the relevant stakeholders and encourage them to keep to that standard. In an effort to prevent the unnecessary loss of lives, we request parents to send their children to the initiation schools that are approved.

We therefore, call upon parents to authenticate the legitimacy of initiation schools they intend to send their children with their respective Traditional Authorities. There will be zero tolerance to people who want to take chances by running initiation schools without permits. We also want to re-emphasize that we will not be lenient to people who will be running illegal initiation schools. As the house we will not rest until all perpetrators who would have been discovered to have violated all initiation schools' regulations have been brought to book. As we have done in the past, we will be working with our law enforcement agencies, to prevent the 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 in preparation for the 2019 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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