



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY MEC DIEKETSENG MASHEGO (ON BEHALF OF THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA) DURING THE WOR'D TB DAY COMMEMORATION HELD AT PETER NCHABELENG SPORT GROUND, SCHOONOORD VILLAGE, MAKHUDUTHAMAGA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT, ON THE 20TH MARCH 2025

Programme Director

Kgoshi Mashegoana-Tswaledi: Ngwato

Kgoshi Legare Mashegoana: Gosebo a Gosebo

Kgoshigadi Maloma:

Kgoshidadi Seopela

MEC 'S

Executive Mayor of SDM cllr Mina Bahula

Mayor of Makhuduthmaga local municipality: cllr Merah Mahlase: Hunadi

Mayors

Speakers

Chiefwhips

Councillors

Honourable Guests

Distinguished Colleagues

Healthcare Workers, and Members of Our Community,

Thobela, Ndi matsheloni, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goie more,

Today, we gather to observe World TB Day, a day that reminds us of the relentless battle we continue to fight against tuberculosis. As we mark this occasion, we take a moment to reflect on the lives lost to this devastating disease.

We remember the men, women, and children who fought courageously, enduring pain and suffering in silence, yet holding on to hope. To the families who have lost loved ones, we extend our deepest sympathies. Their loss is not just a statistic but a painful reminder that TB remains a significant public health threat.

As we pay tribute to their resilience, we also renew our commitment to ensuring that no more lives are lost to a disease that is both preventable and curable.

Programme Director, this year, we commemorate World TB Day under the theme, “Yes, You and I Can End TB! Commit, Invest, Deliver.” This theme is not just a slogan but a call to action for all of us.

Ending TB requires a collective effort from every individual, community, healthcare worker, and government institution. We cannot afford to be complacent.

South Africa remains one of the countries with the highest burden of TB, and while progress has been made, we are not yet on track to meet our End TB goals. In 2022 alone, an estimated 270,000 new TB cases were recorded in our country. These are not just numbers; they represent real people, parents, children, workers, and students whose lives have been disrupted by this disease.

In our province, during the 2023/2024 financial year, we initiated treatment for over 13,000 TB patients. Encouragingly, the majority successfully completed their treatment, but we must also acknowledge the stark reality that many did not. The mortality rate remains unacceptably high, with over 1,600 lives lost while undergoing treatment.

Programme Director, what is even more concerning is that a significant number of those who succumbed to TB were also living with HIV. This highlights the urgent need for integrated healthcare services, ensuring that all HIV-positive individuals are screened for TB and placed on TB Preventative Therapy if they test negative.

No one should lose their life when effective treatment exists.

The fight against TB begins with awareness, and awareness starts with testing. Too many people still delay getting tested out of fear or misinformation.

We must emphasize a simple but powerful message: TB is curable.

The first step is to get screened and tested. If diagnosed, start treatment immediately and remain on it until fully cured. The government, through the National Department of Health, has launched the Targeted Universal Testing for TB Strategy (TUTT), which ensures that people at high risk are routinely tested, even if they do not show symptoms.

This includes those who have previously had TB, people living with HIV, pregnant women, and those in close contact with TB patients. By detecting cases early, we can initiate treatment sooner and prevent the further spread of the disease.

Programme Director, however, testing alone is not enough. One of the greatest obstacles to eradicating TB is stigma. Many individuals fear the social consequences of being diagnosed with TB, leading them to suffer in silence.

We must break this cycle of fear and discrimination. TB does not discriminate, it can affect anyone. And just as anyone can get TB, everyone can be cured with proper treatment. Instead of alienating those diagnosed, we must offer them support and encouragement.

Stigmatization only pushes people away from seeking help, increasing the risk of transmission within our families, workplaces, and communities.

A person who is diagnosed but does not start treatment poses a risk to those around them, colleagues, classmates, and even those who share public transport. Instead of turning away, we must encourage them to adhere to their treatment for their own health and the safety of those they love.

Programme Director, prevention is equally critical in our battle against TB. We must take proactive steps to protect ourselves and those around us. Those who have been in close contact with TB patients should get tested regularly.

If they test negative, they should be placed on TB Preventative Therapy (TPT) to reduce their risk of developing active TB.

Simple preventive measures such as proper ventilation, covering our mouths when coughing, and maintaining good hygiene practices can also go a long way in reducing transmission. If we all play our part, we can move closer to achieving a TB-free generation.

Programme Director, as we stand here today, I urge every one of you to take action. The responsibility to end TB does not rest solely on the government or healthcare professionals, it is a shared duty. We must encourage routine TB screening, promote adherence to treatment, and educate our communities about the dangers of untreated TB.

The power to change the course of this epidemic lies in our hands. Each of us has a role to play in ensuring that TB no longer claims lives.

As I conclude, let us reaffirm our commitment to this fight. We are stronger when we stand together. Let us unite as a province, as a country, and as a global community to defeat TB.

Let us pledge to get tested, to encourage our loved ones to seek care, and to spread awareness. A healthier future starts with us.

We have the tools, the knowledge, and the treatment. Now, we must act.

Yes, You and I Can End TB!

Let us commit, invest, and deliver on this promise. Let us take action today. Let us breathe easy, knowing that TB is curable and that together, we can make a difference.

Thank you.