

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE WORLD TB DAY  
COMMEMORATION AT DAN VILLAGE, MOPANI DISTRICT

20 March 2026

Programme Director,  
Members of the Executive Council,  
Executive Mayor of Mopani District, Cllr Pule Shayi,  
Mayor of Greater Tzaneen, Cllr Gerson Molapisane,  
Councillors,  
Chairperson of the Provincial Civil Society Forum and Co-Chairperson of Limpopo  
Provincial AIDS Council, Dr KG Monyela,  
Hosi Shiluvana III,  
Traditional Leaders,  
Faith-Based Leaders,  
TB Ambassadors,  
Invited Schools,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Avuxeni, Ndi matsheloni, Thobela, Good Morning, Goeie More,

Today, we gather not merely as a province, but as a people bound by a shared journey, one marked by resilience, courage and an unwavering determination to overcome. The story of tuberculosis in our province is not only a story of disease, but a story of communities rising, of health workers persevering and of lives reclaimed from the grip of illness.

Like the first light of dawn that breaks through the longest night, our collective efforts have begun to push back the shadows of TB, restoring hope where despair once lived.

We stand here as a province that has travelled a long road from a time when TB silently claimed lives in our communities, to a present where awareness is growing, services are expanding, and hope is steadily being restored. Our clinics have become centres of healing, our communities are more informed and our people are beginning to take charge of their health. Indeed, we have come far, but the journey is not yet complete.

Programme Director, as we join the global community in commemorating World TB Day, we are reminded that today must go beyond reflection, it must inspire action. We cannot afford to be passive while TB continues to affect our people.

This year's theme, "Yes! You and I Can End TB," is both a declaration and a responsibility. It reminds us that ending TB is not the responsibility of government alone, but of each and every one of us. It calls for collective action, uniting communities, healthcare workers, leaders and individuals in a shared mission.

Programme Director,

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease that spreads through the air when a person with TB coughs, sneezes, or even speaks. While many people may carry the infection without symptoms, a weakened immune system allows the disease to develop and spread. Those most at risk include people living with HIV, individuals with chronic conditions such as diabetes, young children, the elderly, and smokers.

The signs of TB- persistent cough, prolonged fever, night sweats and unexplained weight loss must never be ignored. Early diagnosis is critical, because it saves lives and prevents further transmission.

Let me emphasise this: TB is both preventable and curable. With proper treatment, which can range from six to nine months depending on the type of TB, patients can fully recover. Even drug-resistant TB, though more complex, can still be treated successfully. Prevention, on the other hand, begins with simple actions such as covering one's mouth when coughing, ensuring proper ventilation, wearing masks when necessary and seeking testing when exposed.

Programme Director,

Allow me to reflect on the progress we have made so far as a province, because behind every number is a life impacted and a community strengthened. Since February this year, through our Cheka Impilo Campaign, we have reached 8,419 people across Limpopo with vital health services and information.

Of these, 5,072 individuals were screened for TB, demonstrating encouraging community participation, while 214 people who showed symptoms were promptly tested or referred for further diagnosis, ensuring that potential cases are identified early and managed effectively.

Our integrated approach to healthcare continues to yield positive results. In the same period, over 3,000 people tested for HIV, with 88 individuals testing positive and immediately linked to care. At the same time, 4,818 people were screened for blood pressure and 2,937 for diabetes, reinforcing our commitment to addressing health in a holistic manner.

Our outreach programmes have also brought services closer to the people. A total of 957 households were visited in Dan Village and Nkowankowa, connecting communities to essential services such as SASSA and Home Affairs. Within these communities, 317 individuals were screened for TB, 80 sputum samples were collected for testing, and prevention efforts were strengthened through the distribution of 1,400 male condoms and 300 female condoms.

In addition, we invested in long-term community wellbeing by supporting five Early Childhood Development centres with food gardens, water infrastructure and resources to promote nutrition and sustainability. These initiatives reflect our broader vision of building healthier and more resilient communities.

Programme Director, within our healthcare facilities, we are now screening more than 100% of patients for TB symptoms, ensuring that no individual, whether a patient or accompanying caregiver, is left unchecked. We have also significantly increased TB testing, conducting over 64,000 additional tests, which represents a 75% increase compared to the previous year. This demonstrates our commitment to actively finding and treating TB cases.

Encouragingly, 99.2% of those diagnosed with TB are started on treatment without delay, exceeding our target of 95%. Furthermore, treatment success rates have surpassed 81%, indicating that more patients are completing their treatment and being cured.

However, despite this progress, we must confront a difficult truth. While TB-related deaths have declined from 14.4% to 13.1%, people are still losing their lives—often due to late diagnosis. One death from TB is one too many and it reminds us that our work is far from over.

We have also seen improvement in TB preventive therapy, with uptake increasing from 7.5% to nearly 50% among individuals older than five years. Yet, this remains below our target of 70%, meaning too many people at risk are still not receiving the preventive care they need.

To our healthcare workers, I say: continue your vital work with dedication and compassion. Your efforts are saving lives every day.

To our leaders and community influencers: use your voices to encourage testing, to fight stigma and to support those on treatment.

And to the people of Limpopo: your health is in your hands. Go for screening, know your status and support one another.

Programme Director,  
TB is preventable. TB is curable. And together, TB can be eliminated.

But it requires action from all of us.

Let us rise above fear and stigma.

Let us choose knowledge over silence.

Let us act with urgency and compassion and visit our nearest health care facilities to get tested.

Because indeed—Yes! You and I Can End TB.

I thank you.