

HEALTH NEWS

18 October 2021



DEPARTMENT BAGS NATIONAL AWARD FOR VACCINATION PROGRAMME

President Cyril Ramaphosa has recognised the Eastern Cape Department of Health as the best performing province in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine at a ceremony held at Ekurhuleni recently.

Department of Health Communicable Diseases Chief Director Miyakazi Nokwe received the certificate of appreciation while MEC Nomakhosazana Meth was in Mthatha for the Vooma vaccination campaign. Handing over the certificate to Nokwe, President Ramaphosa heaped praise on the province, saying it has consistently performed well in its vaccination campaign.

The MEC said being recognised as the leading province in the vaccination

campaign was as a result of many sleepless nights. "We have been working tirelessly from day one, ensuring we don't slowdown in our efforts to vaccinate as many people as possible".

"This certificate is further affirmation that we are on the right track. We will continue to redouble our efforts and ensure everyone eligible to get the jab and wants to be vaccinated, is not left behind. "We are grateful to the President for this recognition which we were not expecting. This award belongs to every healthcare worker and Department of Health officials who have had early mornings and late nights, ensuring we reach as many people as possible with the vaccine," MEC Meth said.

The award comes as the Eastern Cape had administered 2, 099, 722 doses on 1, 484, 239 people. Of those, 1,093,441 had been fully vaccinated by 29 September 2021. Women accounted for 61.85% of the vaccinated population with men at 38.15%.

Nokwe said the recognition was humbling. She said without leadership and guidance from MEC Meth and Head of Department Dr Rolene Wagner, management, healthcare and officials, the Eastern Cape would not have been recognised with the top award. "We are extremely grateful to everyone involved in the vaccination programme – this award is a celebration for us all," she said.

MEC'S MESSAGE TO STAFF ON IMPRESSIVE VACCINATION PROGRAMME

President Cyril Ramaphosa awarded the Eastern Cape a certificate of appreciation for being the best performing province in the COVID-19 vaccination drive. We are grateful to the President for the recognition. While we were not expecting any recognition, it feels good to be acknowledged for the hard work we have put in. This award will motivate us to continue working harder and smarter in scaling up our vaccination campaign.

The award came as a result of hard work from each and every healthcare worker and official of the Department of Health in the Eastern Cape. I want to congratulate everyone of you for achieving this. The long hours, early mornings, late nights and weekends that you have been working - and continue working, have paid off. Your collective hard work has not gone unnoticed. Because of your efforts, we have seen active COVID-19 cases going down in recent weeks while we continue ramping up our COVID-19 vaccination campaign. As of 3 October 2021, we had administered 2, 149, 214 doses on 1, 520, 945 people. Of those, 1, 125, 489 people have been fully vaccinated. This means should they contract COVID-19, they are less likely to be hospitalised.

Achieving the vaccination milestones has not been easy because we have been dealing with conspiracy theorists

whose machinery has been hard at work spreading malicious myths about the vaccine. This has led to vaccine hesitancy, especially among men because only 38.25% of the vaccinated population are men while women account for 61.67%.

We are hard at work, doing everything we can to dispel the malicious myths that the vaccine leads to impotence or infertility or results in death after two years.

Our people have welcomed the facts around the vaccine and are starting to come forward for the jab again because lies have short legs and people now understand the vaccine is safe and effective to use. As a result, more people have embraced the vaccination campaign and have done the responsible thing and got the life-saving jab. By being vaccinated against COVID-19, people are not only protecting themselves but their loved ones and communities at large. While we appreciate the award and acknowledge the hard work we have done so far, a lot still has to be done.

We still have a long way to go before we vaccinate 67% of our population and achieve herd immunity. But for now, we must celebrate this important

recognition by the President while we redouble our efforts and ensure we reach more people with the vaccine, no matter where they are.

Already, we have taken our vaccination campaign to taverns, tshisanyamas, sports fields, traditional councils, tertiary institutions, social grants pay points, among others as we continue to ramp up our vaccination roll-out. And yet, we must continue being innovative so that we don't leave anyone behind who wants to be vaccinated.

We must ask more of you. We ask that you continue sacrificing your time for the betterment of the province. As the Home of Legends we must continue to lead other provinces. If we continue to work together like we have been doing since the advent of COVID-19, working towards the Eastern Cape we want, will be easy.

Again, let me once again congratulate Team Eastern Cape Health for this recognition. You all deserve this accolade.

Whatever you do, don't forget to continue adhering to the non-pharmaceutical protocols of good personal hygiene by regularly washing your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitiser, wearing masks and social distancing.



EASTERN CAPE COVID-19 VACCINATION ROLLOUT

The Eastern Cape Province is now fully engaged in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout programme, having fully vaccinated more than 1million people around the province. In an effort to reach the 4,5million herd immunity by end March 2022, the Eastern Cape department of Health has since February 2021 deployed a number of vaccination strategies.

The rollout has been implemented in various phases, with the frontline healthcare workers being the first group to be inoculated, followed by essential workers and the 60-year-olds and above. The vaccination was also opened to the 35-49 aged group and later 18-year-olds and above were also given a chance.

The department has also increased its capability to provide vaccination services, sometimes deploying innovations like the Transvaco Train, and also expanding sites to where people live, work and play, making it convenient to access the vaccine.

In this regard, the department collaborates with SASSA by using SSASA pay points, shopping malls, retail outlets, community halls and mobile pop up vaccination sites taking the jab closer to the people.

Moreover, through collaboration with the department of education to use schools as vaccination sites. The vaccination efforts were further enhanced by introducing Drive-Through sites in order to reach out to all the eligible individuals especially youth and men, in all the districts.

In rural areas vaccination programme is strengthened through various efforts such as outreach vaccination.

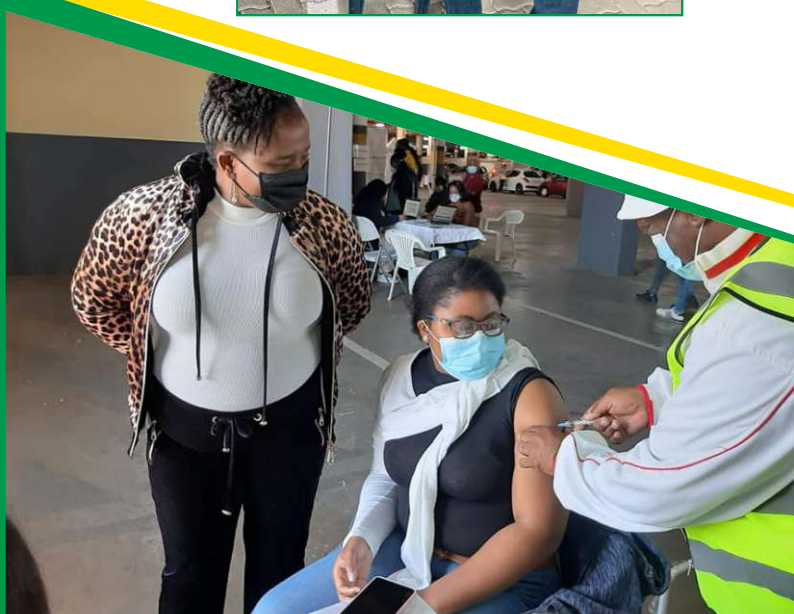
MEC for health Nomakhosazana Meth recently launched a vaccination drive in taverns "Make your tavern a safe place to chill! **NO VAX NO BEER CAMPAIGN**", with the target audience being men and the youth.



The department has achieved all these milestones through partnerships and collaborations with NGOs, Traditional leaders and the municipalities. The department's strategic partners stepped forward to assist the department on the vaccination programme.

The department adopted a differentiated approach, targeting specific market segments and regularly monitoring performance. Regular monitoring and evaluation of performance is intended to identify, analyse areas and provide support to sub-district and facilities experiencing challenges of meeting set targets and provincial average.

Currently, women account for the majority of the vaccinated population in the province at 61.85, with men only at 31.15%. The department continues to encourage men to come forward to receive the life-saving jab.



TRAIN TRANSVACO BOOST VACCINATION DRIVE

The Eastern Cape Covid-19 vaccination programme has been intensified by the arrival of the Transnet Vaccine Train Transvaco to provide additional capacity to the province's vaccination rollout. Transvaco is a mobile vaccine facility on rail, with state-of-the-art equipment and operating systems that provides Covid-19 vaccine services at designated train stations. It travels to communities along the rail corridor in order to expand the reach of government's vaccine programme. Transvaco Train provides additional capacity for the vaccine roll-out, thus reducing the load on state facilities whilst also making it easier for people to access vaccinations.

The Eastern Cape is the second province to benefit from Transnet Vaccine Train Transvaco services after Gauteng. During its arrival in the province, the Transvaco was parked at Swartkops Train station in Gqeberha, the first stop on a three-month journey through the province. The train had a successful vaccination drive in Gqeberha, with 1,936 people having been vaccinated, 1,253 of those being men. After Gqeberha, Transvaco moved to East London Train Station where 2339 people were inoculated.

Vaccine Train Transvaco is currently stationed at the Mount Ruth train station in Mdantsane, where it has already inoculated 824 people since its arrival on Monday the 27 September 2021. Following its 10-day drive in Mdantsane, Transvaco will move to King Williams Town, Mthatha, Idutywa, and Komani before leaving the province on the 16th December 2021. It will spend the same number of days in all these areas.



Department celebrates African Traditional Medicine Day

The department joined the international community and celebrated the annual African Traditional Medicine Day. The celebrations were held at the City Hall in Gqeberha. This year's commemoration was celebrated under the theme "Traditional Medicine Research and Development", where impepho and ingoma were the order of the day.

African Traditional Medicine is commemorated to promote the importance of the continent's rich biodiversity of medicinal plants and herbs in improving well-being. The role of traditional health practitioners was defined as far back as 1978 in the alma ata declaration where the week of 26-31 August was declared as African Traditional Medicine week.

Deputy Director General for Clinical Services, Dr Litha Matiwané explained the programmes and processes the department follows in dealing with the traditional community. "We have structures from the sub-districts

right to the province, we are here to celebrate traditional medicine as well as to strengthen partnerships between the department and traditional healers" Matiwané said.

The National department started implementing the agreement by creating a directorate in 2007 focusing on the traditional health practitioners bill passed by parliament in 2008. Also in attendance was Director for Traditional Health in the National department, Mr Mbedzi. Mr Mbedzi expressed gratitude and appreciation in the role played by traditional healers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Traditional healers have played a fundamental role especially that of health promotions when it comes to health education and serving as messengers for the department. I'm here to confirm that the partnership is a strong one between government and traditional health practitioners", he said. MEC Nomakhosazana Meth congratulated the traditional health for their unity as traditional healers. "United you'll achieve a lot, we are committed to strengthen the relationship between the department, institutions of Higher Learning and Traditional health practitioners. Earlier this year we said, this year was a year of partnerships", MEC Meth said.





VOOMA VACCINATION WEEKEND LAUNCH

Premier Oscar Mabuyane together with Health MEC, Nomakhozana Meth officially launched the Vooma Vaccination Weekend at the Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha on the 01 October 2021. The Campaign, spearheaded by President Cyril Ramaphosa Nationally, is mainly aimed at encouraging the South African population to Vooma and vaccinate against Covid-19.

The Vooma Vaccine campaign is led by President Ramaphosa who launched it nationally for provinces and municipalities to also launch, in an effort to vaccinate as many people as possible. Speaking during the launch, Premier Mabuyane emphasised the importance of being vaccinated and encouraged the Eastern Cape community to come forward for inoculation. "Our target is to vaccinate 17million people in the age group 18 years and up by December this year, we still have a lot of work to do to ensure we preserve the lives and livelihoods of our people", said Premier Oscar Mabuyane.

"The livelihoods of the people of our province and the country generally have been impacted as this virus has had an effect on the economy, we invite people to walk to their nearest sites over the weekend as the Vooma Vaccine Weekend continues until Sunday," Premier Mabuyane said. The Eastern Cape has ensured the province is counted

amongst provinces who have heeded the call from the president. "We welcome the campaign as we believe it will greatly assist us in scaling up numbers as the OR Tambo district has the lowest numbers of people who are vaccinated". MEC Meth said areas like Nyandeni, King Sabata Dalindyebo and Port St Johns are a cause for concern as the numbers remain relatively low. The province is currently having most vaccinated people nationwide. "We are proud as a province, as this will ensure that we reach herd immunity by end March next year", MEC Meth concluded. More than three hundred vaccination sites were operational throughout the Vooma Vaccination weekend across all districts. By the end of the weekend, a total of over 34 000 people had been inoculated, bringing the number of fully vaccinated people to 1, 125, 489 by the end of Sunday.

Messages of support from the Walter Sisulu University and South African Local Government Association (SALGA) also intensified the role of partnerships. "We are honoured as the university, the choice of this campus was the best. The campus has 14 000 students and we can assure you the impact will be enormous", said Professor Mashudu Maselesele. "Salga is behind this programme, siyavuma nathi we are coming here to reaffirm our commitment to working together to mobilise communities. It was encouraging to see young people seizing the opportunity to come forward and vaccinate", said Cllr Janda on behalf of Salga.

The MEC, who first led a motorcade in and around Mthatha, encouraging residents to be vaccinated, called on people to continue adhering to non-pharmaceutical protocols of wearing masks, social distancing and regularly wash their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitiser. "These three simple things saved thousands of lives way before scientists develop the vaccine. But now that we have these safe and effective vaccines, people must roll up their sleeves and get the jab, while also continuing to adhere to Covid-19 regulations".



HEART AWARENESS

World Heart Day is a global initiative of the World Heart Federation (WHF) in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO) and was first founded in 1999. Originally World Heart Day was observed on the last Sunday of September, with its first celebration commemorated on September 24, 2000.

Anton Bayes who was the president of WHF from 1997-2011 gave birth to the idea of an annual World Heart Day event. The focus of having this annual event is to inform and educate people around the world that Cardio Vascular Diseases (CVD), including heart disease and stroke, is the leading cause of deaths across the globe claiming 18.6 million lives each year, with the controlling of risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity. At least 80% of premature deaths from heart diseases and stroke could be avoided.

Tips on how to take care of your heart:

- Get active
- Eat healthy
- Manage stress
- Remain at a healthy weight
- Drink alcohol in moderation
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure
- Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.

**PROMISE YOURSELF TO TAKE CARE
OF YOUR HEART BECAUSE
A HEALTHY HEART LEADS
TO A HEALTHY LIFE**



NO VACCINATION, NO SEX, SAYS HEALTH MEC

With men still reluctant to get the COVID-19 vaccine, Eastern Cape Department of Health MEC Nomakhosazana Meth has called on women to withhold sex until their partners get the jab.

The no job, no sex campaign is aimed at encouraging more men to get the life-saving jab as they only accounted for 31.25% by October 3.

The MEC said yet-to-be-vaccinated people were a risk to society. "If all women were to say no vaccination, no sex, we are sure more men would come forward and get the vaccine. This no vaccine, no sex campaign is similar to other health campaigns we have had and continue having like no condom, no sex and one condom, one round. We need to take this campaign because people who are yet-to-be-vaccinated against COVID-19 are putting not only their lives in danger, but their loved ones and society as a whole.

"We need people to be more responsible and get the jab, which was clinically proven to be safe and effective," she said. Fears of impotence and dying after two years of getting vaccinated have been cited as the reasons for vaccine hesitancy.

As a result, the Department has been hard at work dispelling the myths with facts with more men getting vaccinated after being told the vaccines are safe.

Willowmore Hospital's Dr TJ Hewu said he was living proof the vaccine was safe.

He dismissed notions that taking the vaccine leads to impotence.

"As a man who has vaccinated MEC, I can tell you today that at home they are happy," he said. "I can give you the number of my spouse [to verify that]."

The MEC said they also had to be creative and think-out-of-the-box in rolling out the vaccine. "We are also working with tavern owners to make places of their businesses safer places to chill by saying 'no vaccine, no beer'. We urge people to come forward and get vaccinated so that they can drink in peace and without fear of being hospitalised should they get COVID-19."