



## MEDIA RELEASE

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**All Media Houses**

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### **Premier Ndlovu fascinated with Vodacom R500 million Mpumalanga investments**

Mpumalanga Premier, Mr Mandla Ndlovu has expressed his appreciation of R500 million investments by a mobile operator company, Vodacom, apportioned to the province. The investments range from communication solutions to small business support and the fight against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF).

Premier Ndlovu had an engagement with the delegation from Vodacom today to strengthen the public-private partnership with the mobile operator.

Vodacom Managing Director, Mr Sitho Mdlalose told the Premier that this year the company will invest close to R500 million in their network to ensure that it is resilient against load shedding and that they will continue to roll out the 5<sup>th</sup> generation mobile network (5G). He added that Vodacom would continue to roll out rural coverage by making their network available even at the extreme remote areas of the Mpumalanga Province.

"We were here to meet the Premier to listen to his priorities for the province. We are elated that his priorities are very much aligned with ours as a business enterprise, of serving the people of Mpumalanga.

"Constantly what our customers tell us is how much they rely on our network. What we were explaining to the Premier is how we would continue to invest in Mpumalanga. We will continue to do what we do in the education sector where we have Vodacom e-Learning which is a free platform that is available for all users, not just Vodacom customers only, but people can access educational content there.

"There are also various schools that we have in Mpumalanga which we call them schools of excellence, equipped with computer centres and teach the children at a young age, how to engage with information communication technology," said Mr Mdlalose.

He told the Premier that of the 2 500 schools connected with internet, at least 260 are in Mpumalanga. In terms of youth empowerment, they have trained 130 interns in Mpumalanga, who graduated from the TVET colleges, and that all of them are now employed permanently.

He also explained that the fight against GBVF is close to Vodacom's heart, adding that they act proactively to assist the victims from the scourge.

"We train the survivors of the gender-based violence in ICT skills. This hopefully give them an ability to be a little bit free economically from the situation that may have contributed to them being the victims. We equip them with such kind of skills to be more employable and effectively more productive in the economy," said Mdlalose.

He said the company has planned to donate an additional victim empowerment centre, Thuthuzela Centre, in the province, especially during August in partnership with the Department of Justice and the Department of Health respectively.

Premier Ndlovu said he was highly impressed with the investment Vodacom is making in the province. He expressed commitment that the Provincial Government will continue to have a mutual partnership with the company.

“We had a good meeting with Vodacom. I am very much impressed with the investment they are making, and that our children are benefitting from them. This means our children will not only see laptops and computers when they are at tertiary institutions, but will now excel because they would have been exposed to them at an early age.

“We are all expected to fight against the gender-based violence, and I have never thought that an institution like Vodacom would have such a programme. I am happy to hear that they have even established the victim empowerment centres where people that have been abused, could have a safe space for recovery,” said Premier Ndlovu.

Ndlovu commended Vodacom for its contribution towards the job creation initiatives, and that it came at a right time when government is creating a conducive environment especially for the youth to venture into business.

#### **Ends...**

Issued by the Mpumalanga Provincial Government

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