Lilanga Letfu

"Mpumalanga, a Province that works for all"

2026/27

1ST EDITION

www.mpg.gov.za Mpumalanga Provincial Government @MpumalangaGov

MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

ONE CONSTITUTION, ONE NATION · REFLECT. RENEW. RECOMMIT.

MPUMALANGA THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

Editorial Comment....

Every edition of Lilanga Letfu tells a story. This quarter, that story is one of people coming together with a shared purpose to build a better Mpumalanga. As you read through these pages, you will find more than reports on government programmes and initiatives. You will see the determination of public servants, communities, traditional leaders, businesses and partners working side by side to improve the quality of life for every resident of our Province. It is a reminder that meaningful progress is achieved when we work together, guided by a common vision of leaving no one behind.

The stories featured in this edition reflect the many ways in which government continues to respond to the needs and aspirations of our people. From creating safer schools and communities, protecting the rights of women and children, strengthening healthcare and preserving our cultural heritage, to investing in infrastructure, education, economic development and environmental sustainability, each initiative contributes to a Province that is becoming stronger, more resilient and more inclusive. Behind every project is a family that feels safer, a young person whose future has been broadened, an entrepreneur pursuing new opportunities, or a community that can look forward to improved services and greater hope.

While we celebrate these achievements, we remain mindful that our work is far from complete. Every milestone reached also reminds us of the responsibility to continue improving, listening to our communities and finding innovative solutions to the challenges that remain. Building a capable, ethical and developmental state is not the responsibility of government alone. It requires active citizens, committed public servants, dedicated partners and communities that believe in the power of collaboration. Together, we are laying the foundation for sustainable development that will benefit both present and future generations.

As you journey through this edition of Lilanga Letfu, we invite you to celebrate these collective achievements while recognising the many individuals whose dedication often goes unseen. Their commitment reflects the very spirit of Mpumalanga, a Province that continues to rise through resilience, partnership and service. Let these stories inspire us to remain united in our pursuit of excellence, because together we are not only delivering services; we are building stronger communities, creating opportunities and shaping a brighter future for all who call Mpumalanga home.

The first quarter has also reminded us that meaningful development is not measured only by infrastructure completed or programmes implemented, but by the positive impact these initiatives have on the everyday lives of our people. Every learner who feels safer at school, every patient who receives quality healthcare closer to home, every entrepreneur who is given an opportunity to grow a business, and every family that benefits from improved municipal services represents the true value of public service. These are the moments that reinforce our commitment to building a government that is responsive, compassionate and centred on the needs of its citizens.

As we reflect on the progress highlighted throughout this edition, we are equally inspired by the resilience, innovation and dedication demonstrated by the people of Mpumalanga. Despite the challenges that continue to confront our Province, our collective resolve remains unwavering. Government, together with communities, traditional leaders, civil society and the private sector, continues to demonstrate that sustainable progress is achieved through partnership, accountability and a shared commitment to service. It is this spirit of collaboration that will continue to drive our Province forward as we build a future that offers greater opportunities, dignity and hope for every resident.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor-In-Chief	Mr. George Mthethwa
Managing Editor	Mr. Tebogo Ditlhale
Assignment/Content Editors	Mr. Moeti Mmusi Mr. Freddy Ngobe Mr. Jonas Letshela
Research	Ms. Gail Baxen Mr. Louis van der Walt
Coordination	Ms. Linda Ngwenyama
Creative Editor	Ms. Unathi Mbube
Graphic Designer	Ms. Nonhlanhla Masuku
Writers and Contributors	Provincial Departments Public Entities/Enterprises District & Local Municipalities

PUBLISHER

Office of the Premier: Mpumalanga
Makhonjwa Building
No. 7 Government Boulevard
Riverside Park
Mbombela
1200
Information enquiry: 013 766 2242/2266
www.mpg.gov.za

CODE OF CONDUCT

Our aim is to provide accurate, truthful and balanced reporting. As a publication that subscribes to The Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media, we are serious and remain committed to accurate and fair reporting.

MPUMALANGA TACKLES SCHOOL SAFETY CHALLENGES

School safety in South Africa remains a pressing national crisis, with recent StatsSA data revealing that over 1.1 million learners experienced physical violence at school. The environment is frequently compromised by broader community crime, substance abuse, and alarming rates of sexual misconduct. School violence and substance abuse takes place throughout the world and phenomenon is manifesting itself through gang violence, bullying, assault, theft and robbery. School violence affects all schools irrespective of location. It is therefore imperative for schools to develop a school safety policy, with thorough plans and data collection tools to enable them to pro-actively deal and manage threats to school safety.

In mitigating these challenges, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government convened a two-day Provincial Integrated School Safety Indaba from 28 - 29 May 2026 at Floreat Lodge in Sabie, Thaba Chweu Local Municipality signalling a decisive stand against the escalating threats undermining education. It was hosted by the Mpumalanga Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Safety, Security and Community Liaison under the theme “Building Safer Schools Together.” The two-day Indaba brought together learners, educators, parents, local authorities, and community organisations to address critical safety challenges facing schools across the Province.

It focused on key themes including the shared responsibility for school safety, the role of technology and innovation in enhancing security, learner leadership and peer support in promoting a culture of safety, as well as conflict resolution and emotional resilience. Representatives from a broad cross-section of society are expected to attend, including learners, parents, government officials, police, traditional and community leaders, Non-Government Organisation (NGOs), the business community, health practitioners, and labour formations.

It also sought to unite education stakeholders, law enforcement and community leaders to confront the scourge of vandalism, theft, illicit drugs, dangerous weapons, assault, violence, harmful substances, and, unfortunately, sometimes murder on school grounds and during school hours. Premier Ndlovu emphasized that the Indaba was not merely a dialogue but a call to collective action: “We know that a conducive and crime-free environment is essential for effective teaching and learning. Criminal activities in schools must be eradicated. Our children must leave home safely, learn in peace, and return home safely to their families. We trust that this Indaba will produce practical solutions to these challenges.

The Constitution of the Republic guarantees respect for human rights. Everyone has the right to be free from all forms of violence and from cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. Discipline must always be administered with care, fairness and love. Education is the foundation upon which we build the prosperity of our Province. Yet youth unemployment remains one of the greatest developmental challenges facing Mpumalanga, undermining inclusive economic growth, social stability and long-term development outcomes. Despite efforts by government to reduce unemployment, youth unemployment remains unacceptably high and requires focused, coordinated and sustained interventions. South Africa is not merely facing a shortage of jobs, but a serious skills mismatch within the labour market.”

Other key objectives of the Indaba covered visible policing through strengthening collaboration between schools and law enforcement to ensure a constant security presence, socio-psychological support to school personnel and learners through expanding counselling, trauma support, and community-based interventions to address the root causes of violence and substance abuse. The Indaba also cast its focus on the provision of safe infrastructure with emphasis on investing in secure fencing, surveillance systems, and controlled access points to protect learners and educators as well as stakeholder unity through mobilizing parents, School Governing Bodies (SGBs), educators, labour formations and learners to form a united front against criminality.

The Indaba underscored that school safety is inseparable from learner performance and community well-being. By integrating visible policing, psychosocial services, and infrastructure upgrades, Mpumalanga seeks to restore confidence in its education system and ensure that schools remain centres of opportunity rather than vulnerability. Premier Ndlovu's administration has committed to monitoring implementation rigorously, with quarterly reviews to track progress and hold stakeholders accountable. The message was clear: Mpumalanga will not tolerate threats to its children's future.

On the second day the highlight was the powerful show of solidarity as all stakeholders signed a pledge committing to work together to put a stop to this scourge that hinders the natural progression of learning and teaching at schools. This collective commitment marked a historic moment, reinforcing the province's determination to safeguard the future of its children and as safe schools are the cornerstone of a bright future for our learners, country and nation, no child should be left behind as all our children have a right to learn, develop and be free to play and dream of a bright future in a sound and safe environment.

PROVINCE RECORDS A DROP IN CONTACT CRIMES

The regular quarterly release of crime statistics gives the South African Police Service (SAPS) and society a clearer picture of how crime impacts individuals and communities. It provides credible data which is used to plan and at times intervene where challenges are detected. Prior to 1994, this was not the case as the security forces and the justice system worked only for a small section of society, lacked legitimacy and functioned as an instrument of control.

Today, our police and other crime fighting agencies act in accordance with the law and the Constitution. The protections as entrenched in our Constitution, which we commemorate this year are a guarantee of the rights of citizens, and part of our commitment to ensuring that all South Africans are and feel safe. The latest crime statistics reveal an encouraging picture across a number of categories, and while overall levels of crime continue to remain unacceptably high, the decline shows that interventions by the South African Police Service (SAPS) to make South Africa safer are yielding results.

During the same period, Mpumalanga saw a considerable decline in most categories of contact crimes. The good news were revealed during the Fourth Quarter Crime Stats Report presented recently in the City of Mbombela. According to the provincial crime statistics report, reductions were recorded in the following categories: murder 7.7%, Sexual offences 12.4%, assault with intent to cause Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) 5.5% and robbery with aggravating circumstances went down by 19.2%. However, the mist concerning news were that incidents of attempted murder increased by 14.2%.

During the briefing, MEC for Community Safety, Security & Liaison, Mr. Jackie Macie reiterated that crime statistics cannot be political statements, but a factual reflection of what happens in communities. "These figures provide a reliable measure of the challenges we face and the progress we are making as government to fight crime in this province. These statistics must be viewed as more than numbers as they represent the lived experiences of our people. This must also show the effectiveness of government and its law enforcement agencies in protecting communities," Macie said.

He attributed increased detection in some categories to intensified law-enforcement operations, increased police visibility, more roadblocks, targeted intelligence-driven operations, and stronger crime detection initiatives. "A province with active policing will inevitably detect more crimes than one where criminals operate undisturbed. More arrests and confiscations are signs of a police service that is visible, effective, but also determined," Macie added.

The Acting Provincial Commissioner, Major General, Dr. Zeph Mkhwanazi, also welcomed the progress made during the period under review. He said the drop in sexual offences could be linked to awareness and educational campaigns, complemented by consistent ongoing engagements on various platforms, including the media. "We thank all partners in these efforts, radio stations, community structures, traditional leaders, faith-based organisations, the media, and government departments. It proves a point that we have been emphasizing at all times that fighting crime is everyone's business. We will only win this battle if we work together, it is possible." he concluded.

COUNCIL EVALUATES IMPACT OF GBVF INTERVENTION MEASURES

Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) remains one of South Africa's most urgent social challenges, mirroring a global crisis that continues to dominate headlines and devastate communities. In response, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government (MPG) has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening prevention, protection and support measures. This commitment follows a comprehensive review of intervention programmes aimed at accelerating efforts to combat the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide across the province.

Recently, a multi-sectoral Provincial GBVF Council meeting took place against the backdrop of alarming global and national statistics on gender-based violence. Research indicates that approximately three women lose their lives to GBVF-related incidents daily. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly one in three women worldwide has experienced physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime, while an estimated 50 000 women and girls were killed by intimate partners or family members in 2024.

Premier, Mr Mandla Ndlovu called for greater investment in programmes that educate young people about consent, mutual respect, and gender equality, noting that sustainable solutions require breaking intergenerational cycles of violence and changing harmful social norms, emphasising the urgency of translating policy commitments into meaningful outcomes that improve the lives and safety of communities. "As leaders, we cannot normalise this violence. We cannot become comfortable with statistics while our people continue to live in fear. Every victim represents a life interrupted, a dream shattered, and a family traumatised," pointed Premier Ndlovu.

Progress reports presented during the session highlighted notable achievements in strengthening law enforcement and victim support systems. Between January and March 2026, Mpumalanga recorded 552 GBVF-related cases, leading to the arrest of 277 suspects. SAPS reported several successful prosecutions, including three life imprisonment convictions for rape and sexual assault offences.

Additional convictions resulted in cumulative prison sentences of 115 years for offenders sentenced to more than 20 years, 216 years for offenders receiving 10-year sentences, and 43 years for offenders sentenced to between one and nine years. Significant convictions were secured in Embalenhle, Grootvlei, and Amersfoort, while further lengthy sentences were handed down in Siyabuswa, Piet Retief, Standerton, and other policing areas across the province.

Mpumalanga's interventions are further supported by the national government's intensified response to GBVF. Key measures include the establishment of the National Council on GBVF, the strengthening of Rapid Response Teams, prevention programmes targeting men and boys, and initiatives to expand women's economic empowerment. These interventions are expected to enhance prevention, improve support for survivors and strengthen accountability across the Province.

The National Prosecutions Authority (NPA) highlighted the important role played by Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), which provide integrated, victim-centred services aimed at reducing secondary victimisation and improving conviction rates. These centres offer medical examinations, trauma counselling, forensic evidence collection, statement-taking services, victim support, and referrals. Mpumalanga currently has six operational TCCs located in eMalahleni, Ermelo, Evander, Kabokweni, Mbombela, and Tonga. The NPA has set a target of establishing four additional centres during the 2026/27 financial year to expand access to support services for survivors.

According to the Acting Deputy Director-General for Institutional Development and Integrity Management, Mr George Mthethwa, the Province achieved an overall performance rate of 58 percent across the six pillars of the Provincial Strategic Plan on GBVF. Key achievements included the distribution of more than 106 000 sanitary dignity packs to young girls, the provision of psycho-social support services to 4 746 beneficiaries, and the implementation of programmes aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment.

District municipalities also reported encouraging progress in implementing GBVF interventions. In the Ehlanzeni District, 392 survivors received forensic services, while 343 accessed psycho-social support through Thuthuzela Care Centres and dedicated GBVF care rooms. Rapid Response Teams continue to operate in Bushbuckridge, Thaba Chweu and the City of Mbombela to provide coordinated responses to GBVF incidents.

Meanwhile, in the Gert Sibande District, 590 survivors received psycho-social support services, 587 cases were referred for prosecution, and 320 cases were successfully concluded. Meanwhile, the Nkangala District Municipality reported reaching more than 11 103 people through awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and public education initiatives conducted in partnership with traditional leaders and non-profit organisations.

The Council adopted a comprehensive set of resolutions to guide implementation over the next six months. These include intensifying GBVF awareness programmes targeting girls and boys, supporting non-profit organisations to access private sector funding, increasing GBVF education initiatives, training traditional leaders on GBVF legislation, expanding Thuthuzela Care Centres, increasing the number of forensic social workers and forensic nurses, strengthening Rapid Response Teams, prioritising the establishment of a shelter in Emakhazeni Local Municipality and capacitating political leadership on GBVF budgeting and resource allocation.

Stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening coordination, modernising traditional courts, expanding victim support services, accelerating economic opportunities for survivors, and intensifying prevention programmes through education and community mobilisation.

Convened by Mpumalanga Premier, Mr Mandla Ndlovu, in eMalahleni Local Municipality, the review session brought together Members of the Executive Council, Executive Mayors, members of the Provincial Council on GBVF, Traditional Leaders, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the South African Police Service (SAPS), municipalities, and representatives from civil society organisations, amongst others. The meeting evaluated the Twelve-Month Implementation Report on the Provincial Strategic Plan on GBVF to assess progress made in combating gender-based violence and femicide across Mpumalanga, through presentations, discussions, and stakeholder inputs.

DEEPENING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS BEYOND COMMEMORATIONS

Globally, children's human rights are violated every day. Children and young people are especially exposed to rights violations because they are dependent on adults, which can at times heighten risk. Children are likely to form the group at highest risk of poverty, malnourishment and abuse, and are often disproportionately impacted by human rights crises. The advent of democracy guaranteed autonomy and rights for all South Africans and gave expression for children to be protected against any form of abuse and violence. In this country, Children enjoy the protection from constitution that safeguards several rights including children rights and protection of children from any form of violence and abuse.

Around the world, over 61 million children do not attend primary school. An estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys are sexually assaulted every year. In some countries, girls as young as nine are forced into marriage and children as young as six are judged as adults in criminal courts. At least 330,000 children are held in immigration detention in 80 countries every year, simply for being migrants or refugees. Many are forcibly separated from parents and families. In 2019, one in six children was living in extreme poverty - a situation that puts children at greater risk of domestic violence, child labour, sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy and child marriage. This number rose significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the custodian of Children 's Act, ensuring the protection, care and welfare of children in South Africa, the Department of Social Development has been mandated to uphold the rights of children as outlined in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and its amendments, including the Children Amendment Bill, 2005. As a custodian of children's rights countrywide, the Department has a responsibility to ensure that every child enjoys Constitutional rights including protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, access to education, food, shelter and unnecessary separation form their families, amongst others.

In 1997, government established Child Protection Week and two year later it was then extended to 365 days Programme of Action, regulated by the Department of Social Development to ensure that children rights are being protected. This year children's campaigns countrywide will be held under the theme - ''Working Together in Ending Violence against Children'' emphasises the importance of collective responsibility across all sectors of society in the province. The department together with its stakeholders in the children sector will this year focus on strengthening statutory rape cases management, identification, reporting, investigation and provision of therapeutic services with emphasis on.

- Rising teenage pregnancy rates;
- Gaps in mandatory reporting; and
- Challenges in case management and justice processes.

According to Ms Zodwa Maseko, Department's Acting Chief Director for Social Welfare, said, "The Department is implementing a community-based prevention and early intervention programmes (Risiha) to ensure care and protection of vulnerable children through the provision of packaged of services. The Department currently funds 51 Risiha Centres at a cost of over R46 million and 22 Drop-in centres who are implementing the Risiha Programme.

The Department is also managing two centres for children in conflict with the law, and those centres are for children awaiting trial and the other one is for children who have been sentenced in accordance with the Children Justice Act. In this current financial year, the department will receive a house in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality that was brought by Canyon Resource as part of their Social Labour Plan (SLP), and it will be handed over to the department upon completion of renovations and will be managed by the department as a centre for boys with behavioural challenges.

The Department provides foster care services as one of the baskets of services provided to children who have been found to need care by the children's court, and when children are placed in this type of alternative care they are given to social which is a way of fighting children poverty. "The Department intents to fund 221 NGO's that deal with children in the Province", concluded, Ms Maseko. Together with stakeholders on children, the Department will put more emphasis on implementing the 365 days Child Protection Programmes of Action which will seek to strengthen government's commitment in upholding the constitutional rights.

During the 2025/26 financial year, the Department placed 658 children in foster care, 1 312 admitted in the Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCCs) while a total of 30 139 were reached through our community-based care interventions. To access services for children in the Province, the Department has a committed Children and Families Directorate that advocates for children rights. Further, the Department appeals to every stakeholder in the province to support the pursuit to end child abuse in the Province and encourage everyone to stay alert in protecting our children. Communities are urged to make use of the Toll-free number: 0800 111, Child Line at 116, visit the nearest police station and Department's offices.

PRIORITISING SAFETY DURING INITIATION SEASON

Initiation season in South Africa is a centuries-old rite of passage marking transition from childhood to adulthood, deeply tied to cultural identity and ancestral traditions. Despite the tragic reality that initiates lose their lives due to unsafe practice in the mountains, the tradition continues because it is seen as a vital link to ancestral heritage and cultural identity.

Families and communities believe that abandoning initiation would erode their traditions and weaken the sense of belonging and respect that comes with being recognised as an adult in the community. However, the impact of government interventions over the years have been significant, as modernization and urbanisation swept across many regions, traditional practices like ingoma faced challenges.

One of the most pressing challenges is the operation of illegal initiation schools. These unregistered facilities often operate outside of regulatory frameworks, exposing initiates to unsafe conditions, unqualified caregivers and a lack of proper medical supervision. In many instances, parents are unaware of whether the initiation school their child attends is compliant with legislation, leaving initiates vulnerable to neglect and abuse.

Equally concerning is the issue of health risks, Initiates are often subjected to harsh environmental conditions with limited access to clean water, food and healthcare. Poor hygiene practices can lead to severe infections, while delays in seeking medical attention frequently worsen otherwise treatable conditions.

The South African government has attempted to regulate the practice through measures such as the Customary Initiation Act of 2021, which sets safety standards and accountability for initiation schools. The Act encourages collaboration among various sectors including health services, education and social welfare organisations to better respond to community needs.

Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committees (PICCs), established in terms of the Act, play a critical role in overseeing initiation schools and ensuring adherence to set standards. In Mpumalanga, the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA) has enhanced the operational capacity of PICCs through funding support, training programmes, and improved monitoring mechanisms. This includes providing resources for inspections, administration, and mobility to ensure effective oversight on the ground.

At a recent PICC Dialogue in KwaMhlanga, MEC for CoGHSTA, Mr Speed Mashilo, reaffirmed government's commitment to strengthening oversight structures. "As government, we want to ensure that PICCs are fully equipped with the necessary resources to monitor initiation schools effectively. Our goal is to strengthen accountability and ensure that the safety and wellbeing of initiates remain a top priority throughout the season," he said.

Collaboration across sectors has been key to improving outcomes. The Department continues to work closely with health and law enforcement departments to enforce compliance and respond swiftly to violations. Traditional leadership has also welcomed these efforts, noting that the introduction of stricter regulatory measures is beginning to address long-standing challenges related to illegal and unregulated initiation schools.

Mpumalanga PICC Chairperson, Ikosi Richard Mahlangu expressed confidence that the Customary Initiation Act will bring meaningful change by reducing the number of illegal schools across the country. He emphasized that for too long, unregulated schools have placed the lives of young initiates at risk, with tragic cases of children dying from dehydration, infections, and other preventable medical conditions. "The deployment of qualified surgeons and medical personnel will ensure that initiates receive proper treatment and care during the process, this will not only protect the lives of initiates but also restore dignity to the practise by safeguarding its name and cultural integrity" he said.

Law enforcement agencies, including the South African Police Service, committed to enforcing the law decisively, emphasising the importance of consistent application of legislation to ensure that those who operate outside the law are held accountable. This is complemented by the Department of Justice, which ensures that offenders face prosecution, reinforcing the seriousness of compliance. "Where law enforcement is required, we will be available to ensure the law is respected, our aim is to ensure that the law is consistently applied and that government's objectives are met without compromise" said Brigadier Mlambo.
The Department received more than 900 applications from Ingoma holders during this initiation season, following strict screening process designed to uphold compliance. A total of 916 applications were approved, and 25 declined. The high number of applications highlights the continued cultural significance of initiation, while the approval rate demonstrates a deliberate effort to prioritise the safety, health, and well-being of all initiates. Through this system, authorities aim to strike a balance between preserving cultural traditions and enforcing compliance with the Customary Initiation Act. This year's season is anchored under the theme – *"Mabaye Bephila, Babuye Bephila".*

A PUBLIC RURAL HOSPITAL MAKES HISTORY

"Delivering healthy triples amid complications"

South Africa's public healthcare system serves approximately 80% of the population, operating as a state-funded network alongside a parallel private sector. While the system guarantees access to emergency treatment and free primary healthcare, it struggles with severe underfunding, infrastructure backlogs, and resource shortages. Attracting and retaining skilled medical professionals (like doctors and specialists) in remote areas is historically difficult, which places immense strain on remaining staff and remains a challenge.

Rural public hospitals are critical lifelines but often struggle with technical and resource inefficiencies. Their effectiveness depends on overcoming significant systemic challenges - such as under-resourced infrastructure, staff shortages, and geographic isolation - while maximizing their roles as central nodes in the primary healthcare network. Not to bemoan resource challenges, the Mpumalanga Department of Health became proud when one of the rural hospitals - Tintswalo Hospital in Acornhoek, Bushbuckridge Local Municipality successful and safe delivery of triplets in May 2026.

Ms. Sindy Phindile Matlhakoane's (39) birth to health triplets at the hospital was a remarkable milestone that demonstrates the strength and capability of our public healthcare system. Triplet pregnancies are rare, classified as high-risk multiple gestations, and are frequently associated with preterm delivery between 32 and 34 weeks of gestation. Such cases typically require advanced maternal and neonatal intensive care. The successful outcome at Tintswalo Hospital demonstrates the facility's capacity to provide specialized, high-care services in a rural setting.

The Department commend the multidisciplinary healthcare team for their outstanding professionalism, clinical expertise, and dedication. The successful management of a triplet pregnancy requires precision, teamwork, and resilience all of which were demonstrated with excellence, ensuring a safe outcome for both mother and babies. What makes this achievement even more significant is the facility's sustained performance:

- Zero maternal deaths recorded from April 2025 to April 2026, and
- Zero neonatal deaths March and April 2026

These outcomes reflect strong clinical governance, disciplined management, and an unwavering commitment to quality care. Tintswalo Hospital continues to set a benchmark for healthcare delivery in Mpumalanga, demonstrating what is possible when healthcare professionals are supported, accountable, and focused on patient-centred care. MEC for Health, Ms Sasekani Manzini said, "We are directing other facilities across the province to learn from Tintswalo Hospital's best practices as we intensify efforts to improve service delivery, reduce mortality, and strengthen the health system". This progress advances our commitment to:

- Investing in people;
- Improving the quality of healthcare; and
- Building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

"Through the Ezempilo Ebantwini Programme, and as we prepare for the full implementation of the National Health Insurance, we remain resolute in ensuring that quality healthcare is accessible to all leaving no one behind. No woman must die while giving life, and every child must be given a safe start to life", concluded MEC Manzini. Whilst the vast majority of the country's doctors and medical specialists work in the private sector, leaving public facilities understaffed, the government is injecting more resources to improve public facilities and access to health care across the board people can fully realise their potential.

NDM LAUNCHES JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

The energy sector in South Africa has huge potential, but not without the investments needed to turn ambition into concrete projects. The introduction of South Africa's Just Energy Transition (JET) is a national programme aimed at shifting the country's carbon-heavy, coal-dependent economy toward cleaner, sustainable energy. Launched with international backing, it focuses on decarbonization while ensuring a fair transition that protects vulnerable workers and coal-dependent communities from job losses.

Nkangala District Municipality (NDM) has always been regarded as a cornerstone of South Africa's energy security and industrial strength. As the national economy shifts toward a more diversified, lower-carbon future, the district is taking a proactive step to ensure this evolution is not only environmentally sound but also socially and economically inclusive.

It is for this reason that the Nkangala District Just Transition (JT) Programme was officially launched at the Municipal Council Chamber. This landmark event represented a formal partnership between the Nkangala District Municipality (NDM) and the National Business Initiative (NBI), with additional support provided by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) through the Just SA Programme.

The initiative is further backed by the International Climate Initiative (IKI), on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. Historically, Nkangala has relied heavily on coal mining, coal-fired power generation, and associated industrial value chains. While this has driven significant economic development, the global and national transition to cleaner energy presents both challenges and opportunities for the region.

Without coordinated planning, the district faces risks such as job displacement, economic disruption in energy-dependent communities, and strain on municipal infrastructure. However, by embracing this transition, Nkangala is uniquely positioned to become a national hub for green industrialization, renewable energy, and sustainable infrastructure.

The primary goal of the Just Transition Programme is to empower the district to coordinate and implement initiatives that unlock investment and foster resilient, inclusive growth. The programme focuses on three strategic pillars:

- Establishment of a District Just Transition PMO: A dedicated Project Management Office will facilitate coordination, stakeholder alignment, and project execution.
- Economic Development & Planning: Assisting municipalities in strengthening development planning and identifying

practical, transition-aligned economic opportunities.
- Investment-Ready Projects: Preparing and strengthening catalytic projects that are capable of attracting sustainable investment and unlocking growth.

At its core, this programme recognizes that a successful transition depends on the participation and well-being of the people of Nkangala. The initiative is designed to support communities in several vital ways:
- Economic Inclusion: By prioritizing local enterprise and supplier development, the program aims to ensure that the transition creates tangible opportunities for local businesses and workers.
- Skills & Youth Opportunities: Focused efforts on skills development will help prepare the workforce for the emerging green economy, providing a sustainable future for our youth.
- Social Resilience: The program creates a platform for continuous dialogue between governments, labour, civil society, and community organizations to ensure that social sustainability remains at the forefront of every project.

By aligning the efforts of government, business, and development partners, the Nkangala District Municipality is moving beyond dialogue toward actionable, implementation-focused results. This initiative is a promise to the people of Nkangala: a commitment to building a resilient, future-focused economy that honours our industrial history while at the same time embracing the promise of a sustainable tomorrow.

MP INTERNATIONAL FOOD MARKET COMMENCES OPERATION

South Africa is the leading producer of macadamia nuts, accounting for over 25% of global production. Along with China and Australia, South Africa is part of the three-pole market that dominates worldwide output. The country's prime position is mainly driven by large-scale commercial farming in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, with Mpumalanga being the largest macadamia-producing area in the country, featuring extensive farms in the Lowveld, including Hazyview, Mbombela, and Umjindi.

On Monday, 8 June 2026, the Mpumalanga International Food Market (MIF) officially opened with the onboarding of its first client, Green Farms Nuts Co, for the storage of macadamia nuts in kernels. Green Farms Nuts Co. is one of the largest producers of macadamia in South Africa, a sector valued at over $130 million in exports annually, or approximately R2.1 billion in local currency. Before moving to MIF, Green Farms Nuts Co stored its products in warehouses in Gauteng, despite most of its produce being cultivated in Mpumalanga, and its processing facility located in White River. Transitioning to MIF will considerably reduce logistics costs, thereby enhancing efficiency.

MEC Khethiwe Moeketsi applauded the decision by Green Farms to concentrate its full operation in Mpumalanga, attributing it to the impactful investment made by the Province in establishing the MIF infrastructure. She said the move is a beautiful story to tell about Mpumalanga, claiming its natural authority not only as a production hub, but also as a base for facilitating efficient aggregation, storage, trade, and export of a variety of fresh produce.

Meanwhile, final tests of the facility and systems are underway, as the market prepares to open in the second quarter for physical trade in fresh produce. Once fully operational, the MIFM aims to bridge the gap where agricultural produce from the province and across the country intersects with society (traders, buyers, and consumers), paving a new path to transform and reshape the food industry, and thus future-proofing South Africa's food security inclusively.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND INDUSTRIALISTS

Government efforts to support economic inclusion and industrial development received a significant boost with the hosting of the inaugural Manufacturing SMME and Industrialist Summit by the Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (NSEZ). The Summit brought together manufacturing entrepreneurs, emerging industrialists, development finance institutions, industry experts, logistics stakeholders and government representatives to explore practical solutions to challenges facing local businesses.

The initiative was developed in response to ongoing concerns around unemployment, limited market access and barriers that prevent many small businesses from scaling their operations. Rather than focusing solely on discussions, the Summit was structured as a practical intervention designed to connect businesses with funding opportunities, procurement networks and export markets.

One of the key outcomes of the event was the creation of direct engagement opportunities between manufacturing enterprises and institutions such as the Industrial Development Corporation, National Empowerment Fund, Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency and the National Youth Development Agency.

The Summit also highlighted the strategic role of the Nkomazi SEZ in linking Mpumalanga businesses to regional markets through the Maputo Development Corridor. This corridor provides access to Mozambique, Eswatini and broader African markets, creating opportunities for local manufacturers to expand beyond provincial and national boundaries.

A major highlight was the Dragons' Den competition, where selected entrepreneurs presented their businesses to a panel of experts and stakeholders. The competition showcased the innovation, resilience and potential that exists within Mpumalanga's manufacturing sector. Winning enterprises included businesses involved in environmentally sustainable energy production, water purification technologies and specialised industrial clothing manufacturing.

These businesses not only demonstrated strong growth potential but also reflected the diversity and innovation emerging from local communities. The Summit further reinforced government's commitment to supporting youth-owned enterprises, women entrepreneurs and small businesses seeking to participate in industrial value chains.

By focusing on manufacturing, market access, enterprise development and job creation, the Summit demonstrated how strategic partnerships can contribute to addressing unemployment and creating sustainable livelihoods. As Mpumalanga continues its industrialisation journey, initiatives such as the Manufacturing SMME and Industrialist Summit will play an increasingly important role in ensuring that Strategic partnership between NSEZ and University of Mpumalanga strengthens skills development and innovation.

The future success of industrialisation depends not only on infrastructure and investment but also on the availability of skills, innovation and research capacity. Recognising this reality, the Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (NSEZ) and the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) have entered into a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening collaboration in research, skills development and industrial innovation.

The partnership supports the Mpumalanga Provincial Government's commitment to building an economy that is both competitive and inclusive. It also responds directly to one of South Africa's most pressing challenges: youth unemployment and the need to create pathways from education into meaningful economic participation.

Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the two institutions will work together on research initiatives, technical expertise, and innovation programmes and skills development interventions that support industrial growth within the province. The collaboration is expected to assist in identifying the skills required by emerging industries, ensuring that graduates are equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly changing economy. It will also help create opportunities for students to gain practical exposure to industrial development projects and real-world economic initiatives.

The partnership further promotes evidence-based planning by ensuring that academic research and technical knowledge inform the development of industrial infrastructure and economic programmes. For young people in particular, the agreement offers hope for greater participation in the province's economic future. As industries expand within the NSEZ and related sectors, demand for technical, engineering, scientific and entrepreneurial skills is expected to increase.

The collaboration between NSEZ and UMP demonstrates government's commitment to creating stronger links between education and economic development. It also reflects a broader vision of ensuring that industrialisation translates into tangible opportunities for local communities. By investing in skills, innovation and research, Mpumalanga is laying the foundation for a knowledge-driven economy capable of supporting sustainable growth, attracting investment and creating long-term employment opportunities for future generations.

GMLM LAUNCHES GRADUATE INCUBATION PROGRAMME

South Africa hosts a robust network of government-backed, private, and sector-specific incubation programmes designed to transition early-stage start-ups and small businesses into sustainable enterprises. These programmes typically provide subsidized workspace, business mentorship, technical training, and direct market or funding linkages. The country offers a variety of specialized incubation programmes to support entrepreneurs, with roughly 75% of these hubs operating in Gauteng, the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Eastern Cape.

In Mpumalanga, the Govan Mbeki Municipality has officially launched its flagship Graduate Incubation Programme on 2 July 2026. The launch event featured the official presentation of employment contracts to the successfully appointed graduates by various departmental Directors, marking the beginning of their professional careers within the local government sector.

The successful graduates were selected through a rigorous, fair and transparent recruitment process drawing talent from all three municipal regions (Regions 1, 2 & 3). As part of this intake, the graduates will be strategically deployed across various municipal departments. They will receive structured workplace exposure, mentorship and practical training aligned with their respective fields of study. The breakdown of departmental appointments is as follows:

- Finance: 36 appointments;
- Corporate Services: 25 appointments;
- Civil Engineering: 10 appointments;
- Planning & Economic Development: 7 appointments;
- Executive Office: 6 appointments;
- Electrical & Mechanical Engineering: 5 appointments; and
- Community Services: 3 appointments.

To ensure high standards of accountability and maximize the programme's long-term impact, each graduate will enter into a formal performance agreement. This framework will serve as a tool for monitoring their progress, identifying growth areas, and ensuring they receive continuous support throughout the duration of the programme. Through this initiative, the municipality continues to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to building a skilled, capable and future-ready workforce while creating sustainable socio-economic opportunities for young graduates in the region.

Msukaligwa Local Municipality (MLM) was recognised by the Department of Water and Sanitation as one of the most improved municipalities under the Green Drop Programme, achieving second place for Best Progress in wastewater management. This recognition forms part of the 2025 Green Drop Report release and highlights measurable progress in strengthening municipal wastewater services.

The announcement was made on 31st of March 2026 at a provincial event hosted in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, where water services authorities from across Mpumalanga were assessed on their performance in managing wastewater treatment systems. The Green Drop Programme is a national initiative used by the Department of Water and Sanitation to evaluate the operational performance, compliance, and risk management of wastewater treatment works across South Africa.

This recognition of MLM reflects a significant improvement in performance over time. The municipality's Green Drop score increased from 17% in 2021 to 66.7% in 2025, demonstrating a clear upward trajectory in compliance and operational management. This improvement indicates strengthened systems for wastewater treatment, enhanced monitoring and reporting processes, and a more structured approach to addressing infrastructure and operational challenges.

According to the assessment framework used by the Department of Water and Sanitation, municipalities are evaluated on several key criteria, including the functionality of wastewater treatment works, compliance with effluent quality standards, maintenance of infrastructure, availability of skilled personnel, and the effectiveness of risk management systems. The improvement achieved by Msukaligwa Local Municipality reflects progress across these areas and signals ongoing efforts to stabilise and strengthen essential service delivery systems.

A contributing factor to this progress is the municipality's ongoing infrastructure programme, which includes the refurbishment of the Ermelo Wastewater Treatment Works. This project is aimed at upgrading ageing infrastructure, improving treatment capacity, and ensuring compliance with environmental and health standards. The municipality previously provided public updates on this project in March, reinforcing its commitment to transparency and accountability in infrastructure development.

While the recognition marks an important milestone, the municipality acknowledges that continued effort is required to sustain and further improve service delivery outcomes. Water and sanitation services remain a critical function of local government, directly impacting public health, environmental protection, and economic development. Msukaligwa Local Municipality remains committed to building on this progress through continued investment in infrastructure, improved operational management, and strengthened compliance with national standards. The municipality further recognises that sustainable water and sanitation services require collaboration between technical teams, leadership, and the communities they serve.

ESKOM'S RECOVERY PLAN GAINS MOMENTUM

This through Kusile Milestone

South Africa's energy sector has reached a significant milestone, as Kusile Power Station records full power generation, following years of delays and technical challenges. This milestone was underscored during a high-level oversight visit, led by the President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, who addressed Eskom employees at the facility. The visit formed part of ongoing efforts to assess progress in stabilising the country's electricity supply and strengthening energy security.

President Ramaphosa was joined by the Minister of Electricity and Energy, Dr Kgosientso Ramokgopa, Mpumalanga Premier, Mr Mandla Ndlovu, Chairperson of the Eskom Board, Mr Mteto Nyathi, Eskom Group CEO, Mr Dan Marokane and Executive Mayors, amongst others. Eskom confirmed that Unit 6 at Kusile Power Station has officially entered commercial operation, marking the completion of its long-running Build Programme. This development represents a critical component of Eskom's Generation Recovery Plan and signals the end of construction at South Africa's two largest coal-fired power stations, of Kusile and Medupi.

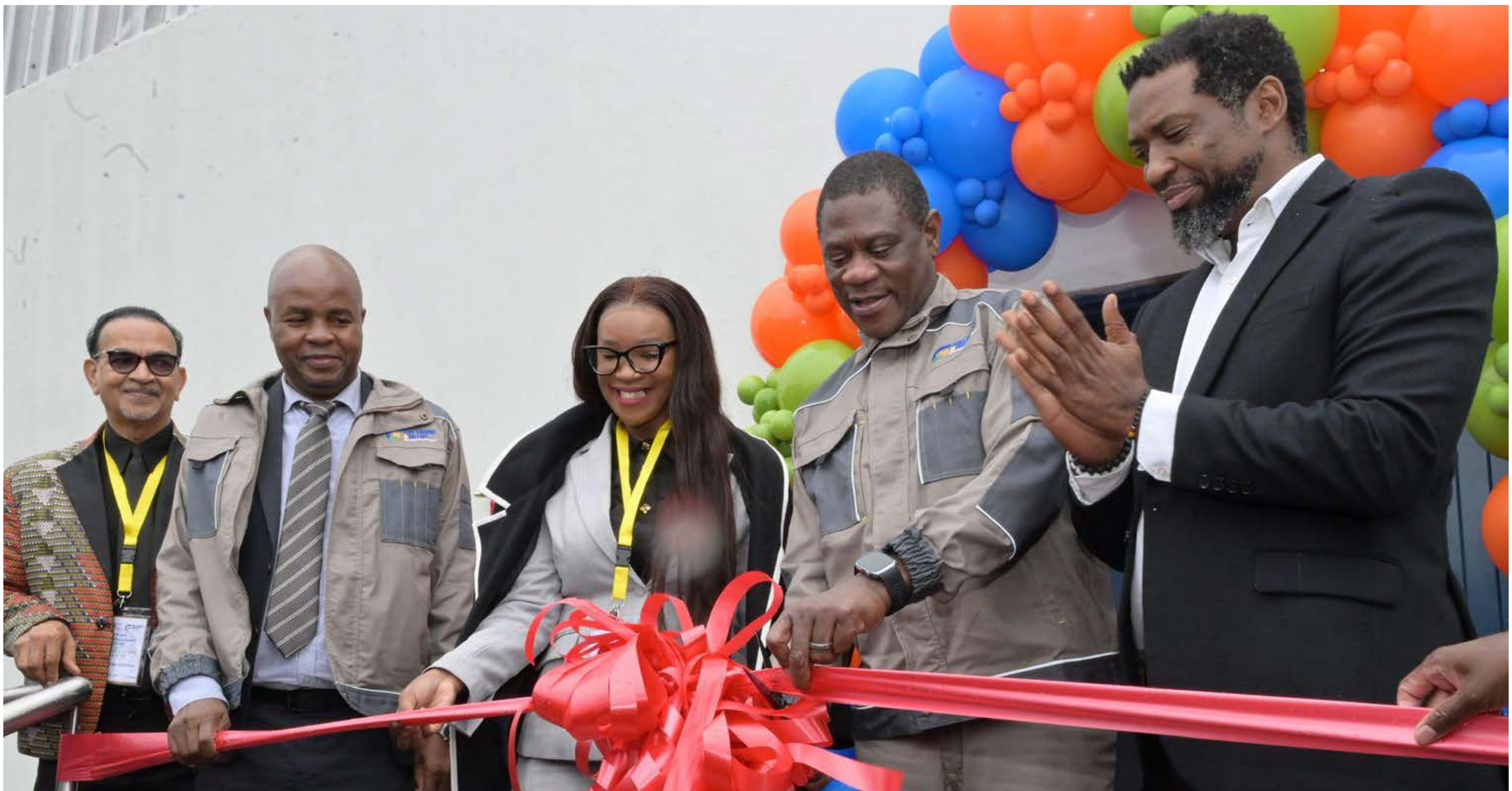
With all units now operational, Kusile and Medupi contribute up to 9 600 megawatts (MW) to the national grid. This significantly strengthens South Africa's baseload electricity supply and supports ongoing efforts to reduce load shedding. Although Unit 6 had been supplying electricity to the grid since its synchronisation on 23 March 2025, it has now completed all testing and optimisation phases. Its output will henceforth be included in Eskom's Energy Availability Factor (EAF), enhancing overall system performance reporting.

Addressing workers at Kusile Power Station, President Ramaphosa described the achievement as a testament to resilience, discipline, and sustained effort. "This station, together with Medupi in Limpopo, are the backbone of South Africa's electricity supply. When operating at full capacity, these two stations are capable of delivering 9,600 megawatts. What has been achieved here at Kusile is a testament to discipline, consistency, and resilience," asserted President Ramaphosa.

He further noted that the progress validates government's decision to prioritise Eskom's recovery through the National Energy Action Plan announced in 2022. Beyond its contribution to energy security, the Kusile project has had a substantial socio-economic impact. The build programme created nearly 40 000 jobs, with more than half linked directly to Kusile. Eskom has also invested in surrounding communities, contributing to local development.

Currently, Kusile employs over 600 permanent staff and is supported by approximately 1 000 contractors during major maintenance periods. These opportunities continue to support households, strengthen communities, and stimulate local economic growth. During the visit, President Ramaphosa and other executive officials toured the facility and received detailed briefings on improved generation performance and system reliability. This follows years of operational challenges that contributed to widespread load shedding.

President Ramaphosa acknowledged Kusile's troubled history, including delays, cost overruns, and technical setbacks, but emphasised that its full commercial operation marks a turning point for South Africa's energy landscape. The power station is a state-of-the-art technology that abates atmospheric emissions, in line with current international practice, to ensure compliance with air-quality standards, especially since the power station is located in a priority air-shed area.



MASHATILE LAUNCHES 4IR LAB AND MILLWRIGHT WORKSHOP

Deputy President Paul Mashatile visited Gert Sibande TVET College in Standerton to launch AI laboratory and Millwright workshop. During his visit, the Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Automation and Data-driven Systems took a centre stage to the delight of many young people who attended the event.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and technologically advanced, leveraging Artificial intelligence (AI) in education is not merely a choice but a necessity. The South African school system faces unique challenges, including resource constraints and desperate access to quality education. The AI-powered tools for personalised learning, automated administrative tasks and data-driven decision-making will make it easier to unlock a future where every child receives tailored education irrespective of their socio-economic background (Spiteri, 2023).

In a significant stride towards advancing South Africa's skills development agenda, the Deputy President of South Africa, Mr Paul Mashatile officially launched the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Digital Innovation Laboratory and Centre of Specialisation Millwright Workshop at a local college. This milestone underscores government and industry's shared commitment or ensuring young people are equipped with future-ready skills aligned to an evolving industrial landscape.

The launch was graced by the presence of Minister of Higher Education & Training, Mr. Bhuti Manamela, senior government officials, industry partners and Sasol executives. This to many was seen as a massive transformative investment in technical and vocational education and training. It also reflected a much-needed collaborative partnership involving industry leaders such as Sasol, the National Skills Fund and Festo.

The state-of-the-art 4IR Laboratory offers students and lecturers hands-on exposure to cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, coding, simulations, CNC machining, 3D printing, programmable logic controllers (PLCs), app development and data science applications. In addition, the Centre of Specialisation Millwright Workshop designed to strengthen artisan training and prepare graduates for careers in advanced manufacturing and engineering sectors was also handed to the college community.

Mpumalanga Premier, Mr. Mandla Ndlovu described the initiative as a historic milestone for the province, emphasising its role in addressing challenges in education and innovation. He highlighted an ongoing provincial efforts to expand digital learning including the distribution of 60,000 smart devices to Grade 12 learners in 2025 and the rollout of 70,000 tablets to Grade 10 learners in 2026 alongside improved connectivity in schools. "This centre equips young people with skills to realise their dreams, but also helps to build, innovate and lead in the Fourth Industrial Revolution," said Ndlovu.

Deputy President Mashatile echoed same sentiments saying that the facility bridges the gap between education and industry while preparing students for a rapidly changing world of work. He stressed the importance of inclusive access to technology, warning that disparities in digital access could widen socio-economic inequalities if left unaddressed.

Citing the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025, he said technological change could displace about 92 million jobs globally by 2030 but create around 170 million new roles, resulting in a net gain of 78 million jobs. He further noted that government is developing a Draft National Artificial Intelligence Policy to guide responsible AI integration across key sectors of the economy.

The initiative forms part of a broader strategy led by the Sasol Foundation, which has invested over R15 million into the project. Beyond infrastructure, the programme has already upskilled more than 800 TVET lecturers, ensuring long-term sustainability and impact. The laboratory at Gert Sibande TVET College is one of two such facilities established, with plans underway to expand the model nationwide.

Speaking on behalf of industry partners, Sasol Executive Vice President, Ms Thabile Magala reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening post-school education and improving youth employability through practical, industry-relevant training. "TVET colleges play a critical role in building South Africa's skills base, yet many lack access to modern technology. Through the Sasol Foundation, we are investing in practical, future focused skills that enable students and lecturers to participate meaningfully in a digital economy" said Ms Makgala.

The launch positions Gert Sibande TVET College as a growing hub for digital innovation and technical excellence through integrating 4IR technologies into the curriculum and fostering strong public-private partnerships. This initiative is expected to contribute meaningfully to economic growth, job creation, and inclusive development.

ENGAGING MUNICIPALITIES ON MTREF

Section 153 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa outlines the developmental duties of municipalities. It requires them to structure and manage its administration, budgeting, and planning processes to prioritize the basic needs of its community and to promote the community's social and economic development. Recently, the Provincial Treasury has successfully concluded its Medium-Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework (MTREF) engagements with municipalities across the province.

A delegation led by the Municipal Finance Unit held engagements which were mainly focused on municipal budgeting processes and financial planning for the upcoming fiscal year. The annual sessions form part of Provincial Treasury's ongoing commitment to strengthening financial governance and supporting municipalities in preparing credible and sustainable budgets.

It is understood that the purpose of these engagements was to assess and review municipalities' draft budgets to ensure alignment with broader financial management reforms and budgeting priorities. The process was conducted in accordance with Chapter 4, Section 21 of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), which regulates the mandatory budget preparation process for municipalities in South Africa.

Speaking during the engagements, Head of Municipal Finance, Mr. Pogisho Pasha, emphasised the importance of municipalities preparing and capturing their MTREF budgets timeously within their financial systems. "All municipalities must prepare their MTREF budget in their financial systems and start early enough to capture their tabled budget," said Mr. Pasha.

Mr. Pasha further highlighted that municipalities that fail to comply with the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations will be required to return to their respective Municipal Councils to table complete and compliant budget documents. He also noted that municipalities facing financial challenges and unable to present funded budgets must develop practical funding plans.

"In instances where a municipality is unable to correct the budget to be funded within a financial year due to financial challenges, such municipalities must, together with their MTREF budgets, table a budget funding plan before the Municipal Council, indicating how and when the budget will improve from an unfunded to a funded position," he said. The engagements brought together key stakeholders, including the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA), to deliberate on key budget priorities and financial challenges affecting municipalities.

Among the key issues discussed were rising consumer debt resulting from non-payment of municipal rates and services, the financial implications of the December 2025 floods on municipal infrastructure repairs, and organisational structure considerations aimed at improving service delivery and ensuring long-term municipal sustainability.

Provincial Treasury remains committed to supporting municipalities in strengthening financial management, improving accountability, and delivering quality services to communities across the province. In addition, it is believed that such processes will assist municipalities to improve on their governance and financial management with a hope of receiving a totally different outcomes from the Auditor General.

IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY THROUGH ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Communities in Pienaar and surrounding areas will soon enjoy safer and more efficient travel following the completion of the rehabilitation of Road D1723, a vital infrastructure project underway in the City of Mbombela. Expected to be completed by the end of the 2026/27 financial year, the project addresses longstanding issues of poor road conditions and traffic congestion that have affected motorists and residents.

The Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT) intervened to rehabilitate the 6.62-kilometre stretch of Road D1723 between D636 and P258/1 within the Ehlanzeni District. Construction is progressing well and includes resurfacing with a 30mm asphalt layer, installation of guardrails, replacement of pipes and Armco culverts, road markings and signage, construction of concrete kerning and paved walkways, and installation of sub-soil drainage systems.

Beyond enhancing transport infrastructure, the project has brought considerable socio-economic benefits to the local community. A total of 75 employment opportunities have been created, benefitting nine women, sixty-six men, and one Person with Disability. The Department has invested more than R83 million into the project. Once completed, the upgraded road will facilitate access to vital services such as healthcare facilities, schools, police stations, and shopping centres, while improving road safety and reducing travel times for residents and commuters.

Meanwhile, on 9 April 2026, MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport, Mr. Thulasizwe Thomo, officially handed over the completed coal haulage route D2274 located in northern Hendrina within the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality. Road D2274 has been one of the Department's priority infrastructure projects. Despite challenges faced during construction, a series of interventions and an acceleration plan by the project team ensured its successful completion. Continuous oversight and regular site inspections by the Department played a vital role in maintaining momentum and ensuring quality delivery.

The upgraded route acts as a strategic freight corridor connecting several mining operations with major energy generation facilities, including Hendrina Power Station in Pullenshope and Arnot Power Station. The route diverges from the N11 and links with Road D1398, providing a dedicated haulage route for heavy vehicles.

The completion of Road D2274 is expected to significantly reduce heavy-truck traffic through Hendrina, easing congestion, improving road safety, and enhancing residents' quality of life. Additionally, the project enhances logistical efficiency within Mpumalanga's mining and energy sectors, contributing to economic growth and development. These initiatives reflect the Department's ongoing commitment to investing in road infrastructure that enhances mobility, stimulates local economic development, creates employment, and improves service delivery across Mpumalanga.

STEVE TSHWETE'S BEST IN WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government has congratulated the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality in Middelburg, Nkangala District for being the best in quality waste water systems management in South Africa. The municipality became the overall achiever by amassing 97% than any other achiever in the entire country. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and sector stakeholders conferred this prestigious accolade to the municipality during the release of the 2025 Green Drop Report, alongside progress assessment reports on the Blue Drop and No Drop programmes at an occasion held at the Sydney Choma Banquet Hall in Middelburg, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality in March 2026.

The Blue Drop, Green Drop and No Drop Certification programmes are key regulatory tools of the Department of Water and Sanitation, designed to drive excellence and accountability across municipalities. These incentive-based programmes assess performance in drinking water quality, wastewater treatment, as well as water conservation and demand management. They provide a comprehensive update on the country's drinking water quality, service provision and wastewater management. At the occasion, Mpumalanga was conferred with excellent awards by Minister, Ms. Pammy Majodina as resounding movers and performers:

- Steve Tshwete Local Municipality: 97% - Best Performing Wastewater Supply System and Overall Best Performing Municipality (Overall winner, Green Drop 2025);
- Chief Albert Luthuli: 11% - 71% Municipality; (Most improved from 2022 - 2025)
- Msukaligwa Local Municipality: 17% - 67%; and (Most improved from 2022 - 2025)
- Thaba Chewu Local Municipality: 10% - 57%. (Most improved from 2022 - 2025)

Welcoming the feat, Provincial Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA) MEC, Mr. Speed Mashilo stated, "It is an absolute pleasure to accept the excellent results and awards by Minister Majodina to a large group of municipalities in the country who have done exceptionally well in either excelling on Blue, Green and No Drop statuses or achieving a high jump improvement in this regard". The Green Drop Report will provide an in-depth evaluation of wastewater management across municipalities, while the Blue Drop and No Drop progress reports will track improvements and ongoing challenges in drinking water quality and water use efficiency.

Together, these reports will deliver a clear, evidence-based snapshot of how municipalities are meeting their Constitutional obligations to provide reliable water and sanitation services. They will also recognise high-performing Water Services Authorities, identify areas of concern, and outline targeted interventions to strengthen regulation and support struggling municipalities. As the sector regulator under the National Water Act and the Water Services Act, the Department of Water and Sanitation has steadily strengthened its oversight through these programmes, first introduced with the Blue Drop and Green Drop Reports in 2008, and later expanded with the No Drop programme in 2014.

The Green Drop Report will provide an in-depth evaluation of wastewater management across municipalities, while the Blue Drop and No Drop progress reports will track improvements and ongoing challenges in drinking water quality and water use efficiency. "The release of these reports marks a critical moment for transparency, accountability and the ongoing effort to secure safe and sustainable water services for all South Africans", concluded Mashilo. The release of these reports marks a critical moment for transparency, accountability and the ongoing effort to secure safe and sustainable water services for all South Africans.

"Our achievement as a municipality deserves enormous celebration as a noble step towards the right direction. We remain grateful and indebted to Minister and Deputy Ministers of DWS and their Technical Teams, MEC of CoGHSTA and Technical Teams for always pressing the pedal to get nothing else but best results", remarked Executive Mayor, Cllr Mhlonishwa Masilela. As the country continues to address water challenges affecting communities, CoGHSTA congratulates all the awarded municipalities and remains steadfast in its mandate to supporting localities in improving service delivery pushing to getting to statuses of high recognition.

CHAMPIONING BOY CHILD EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

"Investing in Young Men for a Stronger Future"

South Africa suffers from exceptionally high youth unemployment rate. Youth development in the country targets individuals aged 15 to 34 years, who make up 33, 1% of the total population (roughly 21 million people). This demographic represents a critical "youth bulge" capable of driving the nation's economy, though they face severe structural disadvantages. Several social realities such as high unemployment to poverty, education inequality, lack of access to mentorship programmes and many others hinder the youth from bettering their lives.

While youth employment has dominated national and international development agendas, government is putting more programmes and made significant progress in that regard. The Mpumalanga Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation (DCSR) continues to advance its commitment to youth development by supporting initiatives that empower young men to become responsible leaders, positive role models and active contributors within their communities. This commitment was recently demonstrated through the Mister Mpumalanga 2026 Grand Coronation that took place at Mbombela Civic Theatre on the 23rd of May 2026, an initiative that extends beyond celebrating talent and confidence to promote boy child empowerment across the province.

DCSR recognises that empowering young men is essential to building stronger families, safer communities and a more prosperous society. Through its partnership with the ABM Foundation, the department supports platforms that foster leadership, personal growth and community engagement. Aligned with DCSR's mandate of using arts, culture, sport and recreation as drivers of social transformation, the Mister Mpumalanga programme provides mentorship, skills development and opportunities that equip participants with confidence, discipline and a sense of responsibility.

Following the coronation, the department hosted a courtesy engagement led by Head of Department, Mr Mxolisi Mahlangu, where the newly crowned Mister Mpumalanga 2026, Nkosikhona Roro from Embalenhle in Secunda, was formally introduced. The engagement reaffirmed DCSR's commitment to strengthening collaboration with civil society organisations working to uplift communities. "When we empower the boy child, we strengthen families, build resilient communities and secure a brighter future for Mpumalanga. Every young man deserves access to opportunities that unlock his potential and enable him to become a leader, a role model and a catalyst for positive change," said Mr Mahlangu.

DCSR remains dedicated to promoting social inclusion, cultural participation, leadership development and economic empowerment among young people. Through ongoing partnerships with community organisations, schools and development programmes, the department continues to invest in the next generation of leaders. The success of Mister Mpumalanga 2026 highlights the impact of collaboration between government and community stakeholders in addressing the needs of young people and creating platforms that inspire positive change. Through sustained investment in youth empowerment, culture, sport and recreation, DCSR continues to play a vital role in shaping a brighter future for Mpumalanga -one young leader at a time.

NKOMAZI SEZ FOCUSES ON INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government is making significant progress in establishing the Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (NSEZ), a strategic industrial development initiative that is expected to stimulate economic growth, attract investment, create employment opportunities and expand participation in the manufacturing sector.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) drive economic growth and job creation by designating specific geographic areas where governments offer fiscal incentives, streamlined regulatory regimes, and specialized infrastructure. They aim to transform underdeveloped regions, boost exports, and attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Located in the Nkomazi Local Municipality, the NSEZ forms part of government's broader commitment to transforming the province's economy through industrialisation, beneficiation and export-led growth. The project is strategically positioned along the Maputo Development Corridor, linking South Africa to Mozambique, Eswatini and the broader Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

The development of the NSEZ comes at a critical time when unemployment, particularly among young people, remains one of the province's most pressing socio-economic challenges. By creating an enabling environment for investment and manufacturing, the SEZ is expected to generate thousands of direct and indirect jobs while creating opportunities for local businesses to participate in industrial value chains.

Significant progress has already been achieved. The township establishment process has been completed, land has been secured for development and engineering designs for critical infrastructure such as water, electricity and sanitation services are being finalised. These developments are paving the way for the implementation of Phase One of the project. Government has also prioritised partnerships to accelerate implementation. Through collaboration with Infrastructure South Africa and other strategic stakeholders, efforts are underway to mobilise investment for infrastructure development and attract industrial investors to the zone.

The NSEZ is expected to focus on key sectors including agro-processing, logistics, manufacturing and green energy. These sectors have been identified for their potential to create sustainable employment, stimulate local economic activity and increase the competitiveness of Mpumalanga products in domestic and international markets.

Importantly, the SEZ is not only intended to attract large investors. Government is committed to ensuring that local SMMEs, cooperatives, women-owned businesses and youth enterprises are integrated into supply chains and procurement opportunities arising from industrial activity within the zone. The NSEZ therefore represents more than an infrastructure project. It is a strategic intervention aimed at addressing unemployment, reducing poverty, strengthening regional trade and creating sustainable economic opportunities for the people of Mpumalanga.

As development progresses, the project is expected to play a critical role in supporting government's vision of inclusive economic growth while positioning Mpumalanga as a leading industrial and logistics hub in Southern Africa. In South Africa, the SEZ programme is governed by the SEZ Act No. 16 of 2014 and has facilitated over R14.8 billion in revenue and created more than 30,000 jobs over the years.

MPUMALANGA LEVERAGE AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA

Promoting the Province as a Prime Tourism Destination

Tourism is a major economic engine, creating jobs, generating tax revenue, and stimulating small businesses. In South Africa, the sector contributes over R618 billion to the GDP and supports more than 1.9 million jobs. It provides inclusive, rapid growth and helps fund infrastructure upgrades for local communities. The economic benefits of the tourism industry ripple throughout a region through several key channels, namely, job creation, the multiplier effect, infrastructure development, support for MSMEs, and increased tax revenue.

Taking advantage of these prospects and positioning itself, Mpumalanga is poised to become a leading destination for tourism investment in South Africa. The 2025 tourism research report of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism revealed that the Province recorded the second-highest number of foreign arrivals in 2024, with a share of 23.8% of South Africa's foreign arrivals.

The Province also captured the third largest share of total foreign direct spend among the provinces. "Tourism is not merely a leisure industry, but a critical economic driver that sustains livelihoods, supports small businesses and unlocks opportunities across our communities," said MEC Jesta Sidell following the successes recorded at the Africa's prestigious tourism trade show, the Africa's Travel Indaba, which was held at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli, International Convention Centre, in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal from 11-14 May 2026.

The renowned trade exhibition aims to facilitate market access. It serves as an excellent venue for African tourism exhibitors to present their products to both local and international buyers, destination marketing firms, and leisure tourism service partners. The Provincial delegation held several strategic engagements with both local and international buyers and key stakeholders. The engagements were rooted in establishing symbiotic partnerships and collaborations with a view to increasing tourist arrivals and spend in our respective countries.

Among other engagements, the MEC and the Interim Board Chairperson held productive meetings with the Indian Consulate, delegations from the Republic of Mozambique and the Kingdom of Eswatini, and neighbouring provinces, including Gauteng, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal, to strengthen partnerships and promote tourism collaboration.

During the engagement with the Indian Consulate, several strategic undertakings and commitments were made towards building a strong partnership aimed at developing tourism between the parties. The Indian Consulate is committed to using its social media and other marketing platforms to promote Mpumalanga as a preferred tourism destination.

As it relates to the current existing TriLand Agreement between South Africa (Mpumalanga), the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Republic of Mozambique, all parties reaffirmed their commitment to service the agreement for the benefit of the three countries. Through the engagements, the parties have agreed to consider establishing a joint website to promote the TriLand tourism package.

MEC Sidell also convened a successful high-level Mpumalanga Tourism Investment Dialogue with potential investors. The dialogue served as a catalyst for building investor confidence in Mpumalanga by positioning the province as an attractive, credible, and investment-ready tourism destination and unlocking investment. The dialogue also served as a precursor to our inaugural Mpumalanga Tourism Investment Conference, which is proposed to take place later this year.

CELEBRATING THE ROLE OF FIELD RANGERS

A Move to Protecting Our Natural Heritage

Protecting wildlife is essential for human survival and planetary health. Animals and plants maintain vital ecosystem services, including water purification, crop pollination, and carbon storage. Losing species breaks the food chain, causing ecological collapse, impacting global food security, and driving economic losses in wildlife tourism. Wildlife is essential to the health of our planet. From pollinators like bees to apex predators like lions, each species plays a role in maintaining balance within ecosystems. When animals disappear, the systems that support our air, water, and food collapse.

The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) is tasked to safeguard the fauna and flora of the Province. It recently celebrated and acknowledged the invaluable role played by Field Rangers in safeguarding the province's protected areas and preserving its rich biodiversity heritage. Field Rangers are the frontline defenders of our natural environment. Through their dedication, courage, and unwavering commitment, they protect wildlife, safeguard ecosystems, combat poaching, and ensure that future generations can continue to experience and enjoy South Africa's remarkable natural heritage.

Working under challenging and dangerous conditions, Field Rangers regularly confront threats such as poaching, illegal mining, environmental crimes, and other unlawful activities that threaten the sustainability of our protected areas. Their efforts are critical in maintaining the ecological integrity of the province's nature reserves.

As the managing authority of 23 nature reserves, of which 17 are currently active, MTPA is entrusted with conserving some of Mpumalanga's most valuable natural assets. These protected areas attract both domestic and international tourists from all walks of life, offering unforgettable wildlife experiences and showcasing the scenic beauty of the province.

If our biodiversity heritage is not protected today, future generations may be deprived of the opportunity to experience the wonders of nature and wildlife. The conservation work undertaken by Field Rangers not only protects the environment but also supports tourism, which contributes significantly to economic growth and job creation in the province.
Without Field Rangers, our protected areas would be vulnerable to poaching, environmental degradation, illegal activities, and biodiversity loss. Their work forms the foundation upon which sustainable tourism and conservation efforts are built. However, conservation cannot be achieved by Field Rangers alone. Protecting the environment is a shared responsibility that requires the active participation of communities, traditional leaders, and government institutions such as law enforcement, the private sector, and all citizens. By working together, we can safeguard our natural heritage, strengthen tourism, and create a sustainable future for generations to come.

Every year on the 31July, the world celebrates World Ranger Day, recognising the sacrifices and contributions made by Field Rangers across the globe. This important occasion provides an opportunity to honour these dedicated conservation heroes and to raise awareness about the critical role they play in protecting our environment.

MTPA calls upon communities to work hand in hand with the Agency in preserving our biodiversity heritage and protecting the natural resources that sustain us all. Our environment is our life. Let us protect it for today and for future generations.

BUSINESS SERIES EMPOWERS YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Young people are not passive recipients but active participants and enthusiastic drivers of economic growth, transformation, and sustainable development. The high turnout at recent MEGA Youth Business Breakfast sessions across the Province's three districts highlighted the growing demand for accessible business support services for youth.

This turnout also underscored the importance of collaboration between government, development agencies, and the private sector in creating opportunities for young people to bolster the economy and generate employment. The 2026 MEGA Youth Business Breakfast Engagement Series is a province-wide initiative aimed at empowering young entrepreneurs and encouraging youth participation in the economy.

The programme was implemented as part of MEGA's commitment to honouring the legacy of the youth of 1976 by creating practical platforms that equip young people with the knowledge, skills, networks, and opportunities needed to succeed in business. According to MEGA, the programme brought together hundreds of aspiring and established young entrepreneurs, business owners, financial institutions, government departments, and development partners around the shared goal of advancing youth economic empowerment.

Participants received vital information on business funding, enterprise development, market access, compliance requirements, business registration, financial management, and innovation.

The programme featured inputs by industry experts and representatives from various organisations, including the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDA), commercial banks, SARS, the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC), Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (NSEZ), Safcol, and several business support organisations.

The agency has pledged to work with all strategic partners to facilitate access to funding, business development support, investment opportunities, and markets for young entrepreneurs throughout the province. The success of the 2026 Youth Business Breakfast Engagement Series reinforces MEGA's vision of building a more inclusive provincial economy.

CELEBRATING SALGA'S 30-YEAR MILESTONE

A Moment to Reset, Renew and Lead

If there was ever a year that demanded reflection, courage and clarity of purpose from us as a nation, it is 2026. It is a year marked by milestones that remind us not only of how far we have come, but also of how much further we must still go in our democratic journey. A solid 30-years since the adoption of the Constitution, a living document that continues to guide the moral and developmental trajectory of our country – SALGA commemorates 50 years since the 1976 youth uprising, a defining moment of courage by a generation that refused to accept injustice. Also honour 70 years since the anti-pass campaign of 1956, when women stood firm to shape the future of our nation.

Amidst these profound anniversaries, South Africans will also return to the polls on 4 November 2026 for the Local Government Elections. This is not just another electoral cycle. It is a defining opportunity for citizens to shape the future of local governance by electing leaders who are capable, ethical and committed to delivering for communities.

At the same time, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) is set to reach its own milestone. Thirty years ago, the formation of SALGA in November 1996 marked a decisive turning point in the democratisation of local governance. It ended a fragmented system where access to basic services was uneven and unjust, and established a unified institutional voice for municipalities.

It affirmed a simple but powerful truth: democracy lives in communities. It lives in whether water flows from a tap, whether refuse is collected, whether roads are maintained, and whether municipalities create conditions for dignity and opportunity. Over three decades, SALGA has played a central role in shaping this landscape:

- It has driven policy and legislative reforms, including influencing the evolution of local government through initiatives such as the current review of the 1998 White Paper.
- It has stabilised labour relations through a historic long-term wage agreement that brought certainty to the sector.
- It has strengthened municipalities through capacity building, training, and research, improving governance and financial management.
- It helped to establish structured labour engagement through the South African Local Government Bargaining Council.
- It has ensured that South African municipalities have a voice globally through platforms such as United Cities and Local Governments.

SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
SALGA
Inspiring service delivery

These are not small achievements, but represent tangible progress in building a developmental local state. Yet, we must be candid. While progress is visible, there is a growing sense, both within communities and the sector itself, that more could have been achieved. Service delivery backlogs persist. Infrastructure is under pressure. Governance failures in some municipalities have weakened public confidence.

The review of the 1998 White Paper has provided a sober diagnosis. It reminds us that some of the assumptions made in the early years of democracy, particularly around the funding model and institutional capacity, did not fully anticipate the scale and complexity of today's challenges.

Communities are more informed and more impatient. Fiscal pressures are intensifying. Service delivery expectations are rising. Political dynamics, particularly the rise of coalition governments, are reshaping governance in ways that leave communities asking a difficult question: for whom is this democracy working? Coalition governments have introduced a new layer of complexity. Stability can no longer be taken for granted. In this context, SALGA has continued to play a critical role, advocating for a regulatory framework for coalitions, promoting stability, and offering guidance. Without these interventions, the situation in many municipalities could well have been worse.

Over the past three financial years, organised local government in South Africa, through SALGA, has recorded consistent progress in governance, capacity building, advocacy and municipal support, despite a challenging operating environment. SALGA has maintained a strong governance record, achieving consecutive unqualified (clean) audit outcomes over more than a decade. Performance against annual targets has remained high, with achievement levels ranging between 87% and 98%, reflecting effective planning, accountability and delivery.

Collectively, these gains underscore the continued role of local government as the sphere closest to communities, delivering essential services, supporting economic development and improving quality of life. Sustained collaboration, ethical leadership and active citizen participation remain key to building on these positive outcomes.

MARKING 50-YEARS OF YOUTH ACTIVISM

Youth Day is commemorated annually on 16 June to honour the courageous young people who participated in the 1976 Soweto Uprising. The protests, led by black students against the apartheid government's decision to impose Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, began as a peaceful demonstration ended in tragedy when police opened fire on students, resulting in the deaths of many young people and drawing international attention to the injustices of apartheid.

As the country marks 50th anniversary of the Soweto Uprising, the activities punctuated the importance of addressing the socio-economic challenges that continue to affect young people. Despite progress in expanding access to education and opportunities, youth unemployment and limited access to skills development, remain entrenched.

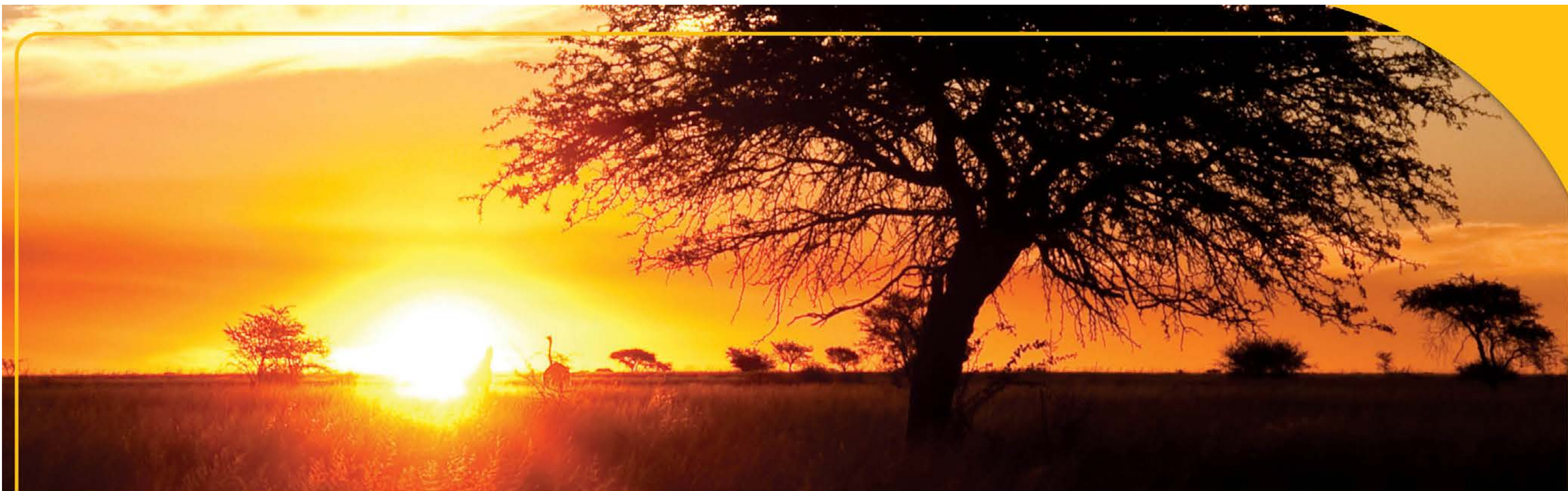
According to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for Quarter 1 of 2026, unemployment among those aged 15–24 standing is at 60.9 percent, and 40.6 percent for those aged 25–34. Mpumalanga recorded the largest increase in unemployment among all provinces, rising by 4.0 percentage points during the quarter. The National Youth Day celebration was held in Gauteng, while in Mpumalanga the Provincial event was held at Perdekop, Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality.

MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation, Ms Leah Mabuza, reaffirmed government's commitment to youth development. "The future of Mpumalanga is in the hands of its young people. We have confidence in your ability to lead, innovate and transform our province and our country for the better," she said. Further, she highlighted ongoing investments in libraries, community arts centres, sporting facilities, and cultural programmes aimed at creating opportunities for young people to discover and develop their talents.

Among the province's flagship initiatives is the Premier's Youth Development Fund (PYDF), which achieved a 100% implementation rate during the 2025/26 financial year by supporting all 54 approved youth-owned enterprises. Since its inception, the programme has created more than 2300 job opportunities across Mpumalanga, demonstrating its impact in addressing youth unemployment and poverty.

The provincial government has also strengthened partnerships with the University of Mpumalanga to expand opportunities in artificial intelligence, research and agricultural innovation. In addition, the Office of the Premier's Discretionary Bursary Fund continues to support access to higher education and skills development for deserving young people.

One of the PYDF beneficiaries, Mr Lindokuhle Shongwe of Fire Artwork Studios in Volksrust, credited the fund for helping expand his business. Through equipment support valued at R300 000, the company has increased its production capacity, expanded its client base and created employment opportunities for other young people. While challenges remain, programmes aimed at promoting education, entrepreneurship, skills development and economic inclusion offer renewed hope for building a future in which young people can fully realise their potential.



KNOW YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Ehlanzeni District

Cllr. Terror E.I. Shabangu
Executive Mayor:
Ehlanzeni District Municipality

Cllr. Sibongile Makushe-Mazibuko
Executive Mayor:
City of Mbombela

Cllr. Lydia Moroane
Executive Mayor:
Bushbuckridge Local Municipality

Cllr. Phindile P. Magagula
Executive Mayor:
Nkomazi Local Municipality

Cllr. Friddah Nkadimeng
Executive Mayor:
Thaba Chweu Local Municipality

Gert Sibande District

Cllr. Walter M. Mngomezulu
Executive Mayor:
Gert Sibande District Municipality

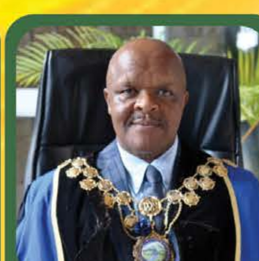
Cllr. Mbuso P. Magubane
Executive Mayor:
Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality

Cllr. Busi Khanye
Executive Mayor:
Dipaleseng Local Municipality

Cllr. Sifiso Mngomezulu
Executive Mayor:
Lekwa Local Municipality

Cllr. Mapulane J. Mkhaliphi
Executive Mayor:
Msukaligwa Local Municipality

Cllr. Ngilosi Ndhlovu
Executive Mayor:
Mkhondo Local Municipality



Cllr. Bheki Mhlanga
Executive Mayor:
Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality

Cllr. Nhlakanipho G. Zuma
Executive Mayor:
Govan Mbeki Local Municipality

Nkangala District

Cllr. Thomas D. Ngwenya
Executive Mayor:
Nkangala District Municipality

Cllr. Vusi J. Nhlapho
Executive Mayor:
eMalahleni Local Municipality

Cllr. Mhlonishwa Masilela
Executive Mayor:
Steve Tshwete Local Municipality

Cllr. Vusi Bhuda
Executive Mayor:
Victor Khanye Local Municipality

Cllr. Nomhle A. Mashele
Executive Mayor:
Emakhazeni Local Municipality

Cllr. Lesetja J. Dikgale
Executive Mayor:
Thembisile Hani Local Municipality

Cllr. Nomsa S. Mtsweni
Executive Mayor:
Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality

MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

ONE CONSTITUTION, ONE NATION
REFLECT. RENEW. RECOMMIT.

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN