



**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH,
DR ZL MKHIZE
UPDATE TO PARLIAMENT ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS
IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF SOUTH AFRICANS
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
08 JULY 2020**

Honourable House Chairperson and Honourable members, we meet today being the 104th day since the His Excellency, President Ramaphosa announced that our country will be going on a national lockdown. At the

le this measure will

society and our economy, the human cost of delaying this action would be

Indeed Chairperson, as a country we did witness the intended benefits of the lockdown. The delay in the spread of infection allowed us achieve what we could not have achieved as a country, had we continued in the normal course.

For the period 01 March 2020 through to 6 July 2020, 1 907 532 laboratory tests for SARS-CoV-2 were conducted nationally. Four provinces including Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng

Enhancing community engagement by ensuring effective communication to the public;

Improving laboratory capacity to test by strengthening the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) and private laboratory capacity for SARS-CoV-2 testing to meet the requirements of the COVID-19 response and improve coordination between the public and private sectors;

Clarifying care pathways in respect of case detection, management and clinical pathways and to align the hierarchy of facilities established or reconfigured for the COVID 19 response;

Scaling-up Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures;

Strengthening capacity at ports of entry by enhancing screening capacity at key ports of entry and augmenting environmental health; and

Expediting research and the introduction of therapeutics, diagnostics and vaccines by institutionalizing mechanisms for COVID-19 related health products regulation and research coordination and building mechanisms for ongoing learning from research and experiences from other countries, to ensure that these inform the response at the frontline.

Between Level 4 and Level 3 (after June 1st), the number of COVID cases increased across the provinces. During level 4 of the lockdown the Western Cape, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal had hotspots using the less than 5 and greater than 5 number of active case definition, however after moving to level 3 of the lockdown, 2 additional provinces namely, North West and Free State registered hotspots.

Due to the increasing number of cases, the less than 5 and greater than 5 number of active case definition of a hotspot will need to be revised.

With regards to quarantine, as of the 7th of July we have activated 139 quarantine facilities across the country. It constitutes a total of 12 532 beds.

The Community Screening and Testing (CST) Programme initiated on 7th of April 2020 has ensured that more than 20 million people have been screened and 302 713 suspected cases have been referred for testing.

Screenings in identified hotspot areas and emerging hotspots show that the CST programme has assisted in active case finding amongst high transmission communities which has allowed our provinces to divert resources to the district or sub-district level.

As at 30 June 2020, 4 821 Health Care Workers (HCWs) were reported to have been infected with the Covid-19 virus across the country. This data represents cases of health workers in both the public and private sector. The Western Cape Province continues to account for 3.92% of

Africa has a well-developed medical oxygen supply system, but careful planning and management will be needed to ensure that every patient who needs oxygen is able to access it.

Since the last release of scientific model results in May 2020, the National COVID Epi Model has been updated to model COVID-19 at a district level, making use of South African hospitalisation data, updated estimates of the reproductive number, and a shift in testing priorities. Model projections indicate that while the epidemic is predicted to peak nationally at a similar time to the previously projected optimistic curve (that is mid-August), it does so at a lower level. This means that fewer people were infected in May and June than was previously predicted even under the optimistic scenario.

While the model projects a lower need for hospital (non-ICU) and ICU beds at a national level, bed capacity is still expected to be breached or overwhelmed in all provinces.

even bury our loved ones because of restrictions or even because we ourselves have been exposed. This pandemic that is attacking us globally, will cause some of us lifetime scars. It steals from us, from some lives, others jobs, others businesses. It spares no race, no gender or social class.

Honourable House Chairperson and Honourable Members, we have now reached the surge. The storm that we have consistently warned south Africans about is now arriving. As a nation we have every reason to be united in this fight against COV