



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



REMARKS BY DR M J PHAAHLA, MINISTER OF HEALTH DURING COVID-19 VACCINATION ROLL-OUT PROGRAMME MEDIA BRIEFING, ON 12 NOVEMBER 2021

Thanks to our facilitator Mr Foster Mohale,
Good morning to Deputy Minister Dr Dhlomo,
Senior Managers of the Department of Health
Guest panellists today,

- a) Ms Steve Letsike, Deputy Chairperson of SANAC,
- b) Mr Mark Alexander, President of SARU together with our Springbok players
- c) Dr Ernest Moloi, Gynaecologist and Fertility Specialist,
- d) The team leading the Sisonke Project, Professors Glenda Gray and Linda-Gail Becker

All the media persons on the platform

Good morning to all South Africans, Viewers and Listeners.

We are pleased to be back to update South Africans on the progress we are making with the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic after the tumultuous election campaigns and the actual Election Day. The last time we gave an update was on the 29th October 2021, which was three days before the polls, a briefing which included safety measures on the Election Day.

We are pleased to report that indications thus far eleven days after the campaigns and voting we have not experienced super spreading after effects. Thus, so far not a single province or district has shown signs of a spike in COVID-19 infections. We continue to monitor the situation with expert leadership from the NICD and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19.

Over the last four weeks the COVID-19 infections in the country have remained stable with daily infection rates of between 200 and 500. The number of active cases are still relatively high even though much lower than the peak periods.

The positivity rate has remained at an average of 1%, with 16 396 active cases yesterday. The number of patients in hospital remains stable, though at 3 636 yesterday, is still a high number with 272 in high care, and 420 in ICU with 164 on ventilation.

The fatality rate has also gone down with 17 deaths reported yesterday, but one death is too many. These numbers are again a reminder that the virus is still very active.

As has been repeated a number of times before, a resurgence of infections introducing a fourth wave is expected as we see in other countries especially in Europe currently, e.g. Germany and the Ukraine going through their fourth wave. Our national team is working with provincial teams to prepare for the fourth wave.

The health facilities 'readiness plan is addressing areas such as oxygen supply of which the bulk supplier has finalized contingency plans. Other areas such as bed capacity, equipment, PPEs and consumables are also receiving attention.

A major challenge is retention of staff who have been employed on short-term contracts due to budget shortfalls. We are also thankful for technical support from WHO.

While no one can tell with certainty as to when the fourth wave is coming, there is no doubt that it is inevitable, driven by movement of people and new variants.

Our genomic sequencing teams are monitoring any variants of concern but thus far there has not been any alarm. The other contributor which is movement of people is inevitable as we get closer to the festive season. This makes it more urgent for more people to come forward for vaccination.

Our vaccination programme remains resilient though facing challenges. Thanks to a dedicated team of managers and fieldworkers at national, provincial, district and local level, both in the public and private sector. I can repeat today that we have the capacity to administer vaccination to all adult South Africans and those resident in the country by end of December 2021.

Our teams in all provinces are taking vaccines to the people over and above fixed vaccination sites. Thanks to these teams and the support of the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), we were able to administer 72 514 doses on 1st November, Election Day next to 1000 voting stations.

As of last night 23 684 440 doses had been administered to 15 818 324 individuals constituting 39,75% of the adult population. By Monday 15 November we will reach 40% of the adult population with at least one dose of a vaccine.

Four provinces are within reach to achieve 50% of adult population in a matter of weeks and those are: Western Cape at 48,20% , Free State at 46,88%, Limpopo at 44,93% and Eastern Cape at 45%. If the other provinces can start to pull up we can reach 50 % nationally soon.

Full vaccination is still a bit lower with 13 215 872 individuals = 33,2% of adult population. As we start to use more J&J vaccines for the adults, the fully vaccinated numbers will go up.

In terms of age bands:

- 60+ = 63,46% which means 70% is within reach,
- 50+ = 57,36% which means 65% is achievable soon.

The uptake by young adults between 18-34 years is worrisome at 24.8%. It is clear that fake news in the social media space have huge impact and Dr Mloi will speak on some myths.

On the 12-17 years old, 252 934 had been vaccinated by yesterday with a total of 353 065 registered on EVDS. We thank the parents and guardians who made this possible and encourage use of forthcoming school holidays for more vaccinations.

As we mentioned last time that the Sisonke 2 study of J&J boosters for health workers would start soon, this has now started and so far 83 769 health workers have registered and given consent, out of whom 9344 have already received their booster doses.

We are hoping that all 500 000 health workers who participated in Sisonke 1 will participate again. The results will give a better indication of the role of booster doses. Professors Glenda Gray and Linda-Gail Becker are here to answer questions on this subject matter.

The vaccination certificate is running and more than 3 million have been downloaded. The technology solution for the QR code verification of the certificate will go live next week. This will allow third parties to verify the validity by scanning the code.

This weekend, starting from today has been declared the second leg of Vooma Weekend Vaccination Campaign by President Ramaphosa and Deputy President Mabuza. All cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Premiers, MECs, public representatives are expected to go out to communities to motivate people to vaccinate.

The message is simple and straightforward: If we all vaccinate we can have a safe and enjoyable festive season unlike what happened in December 2020 and January 2021.

We call on all South Africans to heed the Vooma call.

I thank you