

Eastern Cape field hospital to boost Covid-19 fight

Health Minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize, has opened the Reverend Dr Elizabeth Mamisa Chabula-Nxiweni Field Hospital in the Eastern Cape to bolster the province's Covid-19 response.



Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane, Rev. Dr Elizabeth Mamisa Chabula-Nxiweni, Minister of Health Dr Zweli Mkhize, VWSA Chairman and Managing Director Thomas Schaefer, Eastern Cape MEC of Health Sindiswa Gomba, and Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber CEO Nomkhitha Mbina.

The field hospital – borne out a partnership between Volkswagen, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the German development agency and local government – will boast 3,300 dedicated Covid-19 beds once it is fully constructed.

It is currently in its first phase. The beds will be accompanied by oxygen reticulation and innovative ventilation solutions for patients.

The country's Covid-19 bed capacity is now above 27,000; 400 quarantine sites with a capacity of just under 38,000 beds have been identified across the country; over 50,000 community health care workers have been deployed and they have successfully screened almost 20-million South Africans.

"All the preparations that we had put in place, we will make use of at this point. Although we started with differing and flattening the curve, we did get acknowledgement from the World Health Organisation which pointed out the advantages of our proactive community-based strategy," Mkhize said.

Change in social behaviour

"There wasn't a way we could keep a perpetual lockdown forever, because the pandemic is going to be with us for a couple of years. Currently, a number of vaccine trials are going on, but none of them are expected to give us a vaccine in the months to come. Therefore, we have to rely on a change of social behaviour to beat this virus."

Mkhize urged South Africans to abide to the basic principles of Covid-19 prevention: washing and sanitising hands frequently, wearing cloth masks in public, and maintain social distance.

He said government's testing strategy has enabled the country to complete over 1.2-million tests in just under four months. The backlog has also been reduced from 101,000 to 46,493.

South Africa currently has a capacity of 7,134 ventilators, 5,401 of which are currently available in both public and private sectors combined; 1,000 more have been pledged to be donated and 733 have been procured.

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