

# IMPILO CHAT

MY HEALTH | YOUR HEALTH | OUR HEALTH

SEPT - OCT 2024



"We urge you to always be mindful that our patients come from diverse backgrounds, with different races, languages, religious beliefs, and cultural customs. It is our responsibility to ensure that these differences do not become barriers to care."

MEC. Ms Nomagugu Simelane

## NEWLY-GRADUATED NURSES TO BOOST HEALTHCARE SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PROVINCE



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# NEWLY-GRADUATED NURSES TO BOOST HEALTHCARE SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PROVINCE

*"We urge you to always be mindful that our patients come from diverse backgrounds, with different races, languages, religious beliefs, and cultural customs. It is our responsibility to ensure that these differences do not become barriers to care."*

*MEC. Ms Nomagugu Simelane*



**KWAZULU-Natal Health MEC Ms Nomagugu Simelane has commended the 195 nurses who recently graduated, saying their newly-acquired skills and qualifications will help enhance healthcare service delivery in the province.**

From the group that graduated today, 86 completed a Diploma in Nursing, which is made up of General Nursing, Psychiatric, Community Nursing, and Midwifery (R-425 course). A further 109 nurses graduated with a Diploma in General Nursing, which is a three-year programme that enables them to register with the South African Nursing Council as General Nurses (R-171 course).

Of the total graduates, 159 are entering the workforce for the first time, with 79 of them being male. The MEC also applauded the Province's improved pass rate.

"As a Department, we are extremely pleased to announce that our overall pass rate in 2023 was 97%, which is an improvement from 96% in 2022, and 94% in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are especially proud of RK Khan Campus, which achieved the highest pass rate at 99%. Benedictine Campus followed closely with 98.5%, and Addington Campus with 98%," said MEC Simelane.

She expressed gratitude to the graduates for choosing such a 'noble profession'. "Being a nurse is not only a demanding job, but also a deeply rewarding one. Yes, there are moments of sorrow when lives are lost, but there are also moments of great relief and joy when patients recover, often due to your tireless efforts and advocacy."

She pointed out that KwaZulu-Natal is stronger today because of the graduates' training and newly-acquired skills, which have equipped them well to make a significant and positive impact on people's lives.

Noting the poignancy of holding the graduation during Heritage Month, the MEC also advised the new nurses that empathy is one of the most powerful tools that they will need to carry

in their profession, and that communicating in a language understood by the patient was critical.

"We urge you to always be mindful that our patients come from diverse backgrounds, with different races, languages, religious beliefs, and cultural customs. It is our responsibility to ensure that these differences do not become barriers to care," said MEC.

She emphasised the importance of clear communication in healthcare, saying: "We must speak to our patients in a way that helps them understand the importance of disease prevention, regular testing, and adherence to treatment. Let us ensure that they fully comprehend their ailments, diagnoses, prognoses, and medication dosages."

She also cautioned the new graduates against falling into the "Pull Her Down" syndrome, encouraging them to avoid forming cliques or undermining their less experienced colleagues. Instead, she called on them to use their qualifications, experience, and skills to mentor, guide, and support others.

MEC Simelane also stressed

the importance of professional appearance and conduct, saying that wearing the correct attire, looking decent, displaying name tags with pride, and treating each patient with the care, dignity and respect they deserve was paramount.

"I wish to re-iterate our call for more professionalism and kindness from you, so that we can build trust and provide the care that every patient deserves. It is very important," she said.

One of the graduates, Anele Maseko who received a Diploma in Nursing said she is excited as so much work went to getting the diploma. I am so happy that I've finally did it," she said.



By Nathi Olifant, Agiza Hlongwane & Nondumiso Zwane

# BLOSSOMING WITH EMPOWERMENT: CELEBRATING WOMEN'S DAY IN FLORAL ON WHITE



**In a vibrant and heartfelt celebration of Women's Day, KwaZulu Natal Health MEC hosted a delightful gathering for all the women of the Department of Health at a conference centre in Ballito. Held under the theme "Floral on White" the event was a stunning tribute to womanhood, beauty and resilience. In keeping with the theme, attendees were dressed in various beautiful floral patterns on white backgrounds, creating a striking atmosphere that aligned with the spirit of the occasion.**

The purpose of this event was to celebrate, empower and cherish women in all spheres of the Department, while also paying tribute to the heroes who paved the way towards the abolishment of apartheid. Women such as Winnie Madikizela Mandela, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Florence Mkhize and many more.

The day was filled with inspiring speeches highlighting the vital roles women play in the health sector. MEC Simelane emphasised the importance of women supporting one another, urging them to foster a community of encouragement and empowerment within the workplace.

The event included guest speakers such as, Dr Nikiwe Hongo, from the Department's mental healthcare unit. She highlighted the critical challenge many women face as they navigate their dual roles in the workplace and at home, where they often find themselves balancing their professional responsibilities with the demands of being a mother and a wife.

"Having a harmonious balance in life is essential for your well-being. Surround yourself with a supportive circle of friends and family who uplift and inspire you, as these relationships can provide encouragement and strength. This can help you thrive in both your personal and professional life," said Dr Hongo.

Family law expert Ms Pamela Mlozi, Director of Pamela and Attorneys, emphasised the need for women to think carefully when entering into any marriage contract, and not allow themselves to be legally compromised in the

event of a divorce.

Provincial Chairperson of the Department's Women's Forum Ms Ntando Sithole led the women in reciting the women's pledge in the public sector. The pledge affirms women, and encourages them to be a source of encouragement and happiness to each other in the public service, to increase positivity in each other's lives as well as in those whom they strive to serve with humility and grace and to strive to protect each other, fight against any ills that may taint their sisterhood, and maintain their strength.

Delivering her keynote address, MEC Simelane said it was important to celebrate women, and also urged them to take care of themselves. She also spoke out against gender-based violence, urging women not to stay in abusive relationships, "for the sake of the children."

"If you partner beats you up, one day he will kill you.

Staying in an abusive relationship is like trapping yourself in a cage that slowly takes away your confidence and freedom.

The danger isn't just the immediate harm, but also how it makes you doubt yourself and feel powerless.

So, leaving an abusive relationship is not a sign of weakness, but a brave step towards regaining your strength and starting to heal."

The event concluded with a heartfelt tribute to the women who have made significant contributions to health in KZN. As everyone departed with smiles, goodies, and renewed determination, this celebration served as a reminder of the strength and solidarity of women within the Department of Health, inspiring them to continue making a difference in the public sector.

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one day he will kill you.  
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MEC. Ms Nomagugu Simelane*



By Misithemba Mhlongo and Thobile Myeni



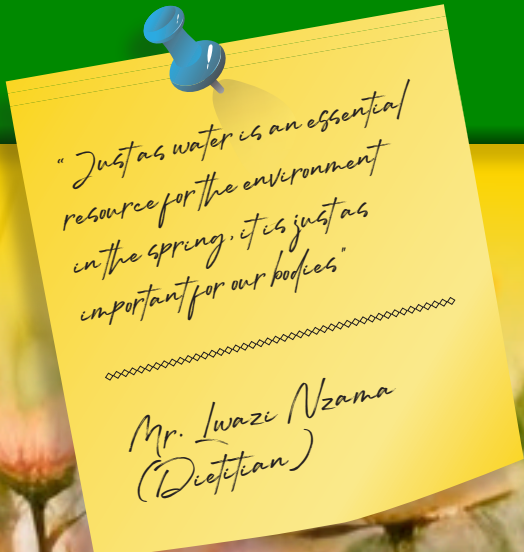
# SPRING CLEAN YOUR HEALTH

**As the winter chills fade away and we welcome the blossoms of spring, this is the perfect time to focus on revitalising our health and wellness.**

It is often referred to as the season of new beginnings, as the days become longer and the weather gets warmer.

Many of us allow spring to be a season of growth or development in various areas of our lives - yet, we often overlook the opportunity to improve on our health.

Understanding both the health benefits and challenges that come with spring can assist you in making the most of the season, while still staying mindful of how you can take care of yourself and those around you.



*"Just as water is an essential resource for the environment in the spring, it is just as important for our bodies"*

*Mr. Lwazi Nzama  
(Dietitian)*

**Here are a few tips and tricks on how to maximise your health and wellbeing going into the vibrant new season.**

### **Sleep Quality**

Experts recommend that adults should sleep between 7 and 9 hours a night. Getting adequate sleep will help with energy, a better mood, an improved attention span and general productivity.

### **Hydration Hacks**

Just as water is an essential resource for the environment in the spring, it is just as important for our bodies. Spring means more outdoor activities and a renewed focus on wellbeing. By drinking plenty of water, people can protect their health and stay hydrated.

### **Exercise and Outdoor Activities**

This is always important in every season, however with warmer temperatures it is easier to do than on colder days. It is said that exercise is a natural anti-depressant that can ward off what is known as seasonal affective disorder. This is a mood disorder characterised by depression that occurs at the same time every year.

### **Respiratory Health**

While winter colds and flu may be on decline, other respiratory issues like asthma, bronchitis or sinuses may still be prevalent. There are things one can do to minimise these issues. These include:

- Quitting smoking and avoiding second-hand smoke,
- Wearing a mask when painting, doing construction work or yard work; and
- Using protective bedding and pillow cases to reduce allergies.

With the arrival of spring, it's safe to say electricity bills will go down a notch, as there'll be not much need for heaters, long hot showers, refills in the bath and excessive tea or coffee drinking.

It is time to go back to picnics and braais in the parks, those scheduled beach visits, ice-creams and frozen yoghurts. As you enjoy being outdoors and all the fun the springtime comes with, don't forget to look after your health and well-being!



By Sicelile Mngadi

# REVOLUTIONIZING PUBLIC HEALTH:

## UNVEILING EPIDEMIOLOGY INSIGHTS AND HONORING ACHIEVEMENTS

*"Once we have established what are the causes that makes it hard to find a cure, we then look for other methods of how we have find a cure to certain illnesses and diseases."*

*HOD. Dr Sandile Tshabalala*



**The KwaZulu-Natal  
Department of Health  
had a strategic feedback  
meeting for clinicians who  
have undergone an intense  
Training Programme on  
Intermediate Epidemiology.**

The meeting brought together key role players in the field of epidemiology to reflect on best practices on Public Health Surveillance Systems, Outbreak Investigation and Surveillance Data Analysis.

A total of 13 officials from the KZN Department of Health have undergone training over 9 months in intermediate epidemiology through the Field Epidemiology Training Programme.

Epidemiology is the study of the determinants, occurrence, and distribution of health and diseases in a defined population.

The graduation of this latest cohort of clinicians puts the Province in a better position to manage complex diseases in future. After presentations done by trainees on the work they have done during the course of their training they received certificates handed over by the Head of Department Dr Sandile Shabalala.

The meeting was supported by important stakeholders

such as National Institute of Disease Control (NICD), US Centre for Disease Control, National Department of Health, KZN Health Districts and eThekweni Municipality.

“These colleagues are representing infection, prevention and control in communicable diseases. We have been experiencing challenges in the province in terms of epidemiological skills, therefore in partnership with the South African Field Epidemiological Programme, we have undertaken this nine-month training to capacitate the colleagues to do better

in outbreak investigation and surveillance said Ms Babongile Mhlongo, director for Environmental Health and Communicable Disease Control in KZN.

The HOD, Dr Shabalala said this training helps them identify to why it’s difficult to find cure for certain diseases. “Once we have established what are the causes that makes it hard to find a cure, we then look for other methods of how we have find a cure to certain illnesses and diseases,” he said.



By Siphumelele Langa

# **MPOX : KZN HEALTH IS ON TOP OF THE SITUATION, BUT PLEASE FOLLOW THE PRECAUTIONS**



The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health is warning the public about an outbreak of Mpox, which was formerly known as monkeypox. The Department continues to fight the spread of Mpox with the support from various development partners operating within the region, such as the Health Systems Trust (HST), National Department of Health, National Institute of Communicable Diseases, the Aurum Institute, and TB HIV Care.

## What is Mpox?

Mpox is an illness that is caused by an infection caused by the monkeypox virus. It is not a new illness and is generally a mild disease for most people, but can be severe for people with a weak immune system.

## Signs and Symptoms:

**Mpox is characterised by flu-like symptoms such as:**

- Body pain,
- Headache,
- Back pain that is later followed in a couple of days by a rash in the face, feet, groin and other parts of the body. The rash will last for 2 -4 weeks.
- It is also associated with swollen lymph nodes.

## How is Mpox transmitted?

**Person-to-person transmission of Mpox can occur through direct contact with infectious skin or other lesions such as in the mouth or on the genitals. This includes contact which is:**

- Face-to-face (talking or breathing)
  - Skin-to-skin (touching or vaginal/anal sex)
  - Mouth-to-mouth (kissing)
  - Mouth-to-skin contact (oral sex or kissing the skin)
  - Respiratory droplets or short-range aerosols from prolonged close contact.
- The virus then enters the body through broken skin, mucosal surfaces (e g oral, pharyngeal, ocular, genital, anorectal), or via the respiratory tract.

## Who is at risk of getting Mpox?

Mpox can spread to other members of the household and to sex partners. People with multiple sexual partners are at higher risk.

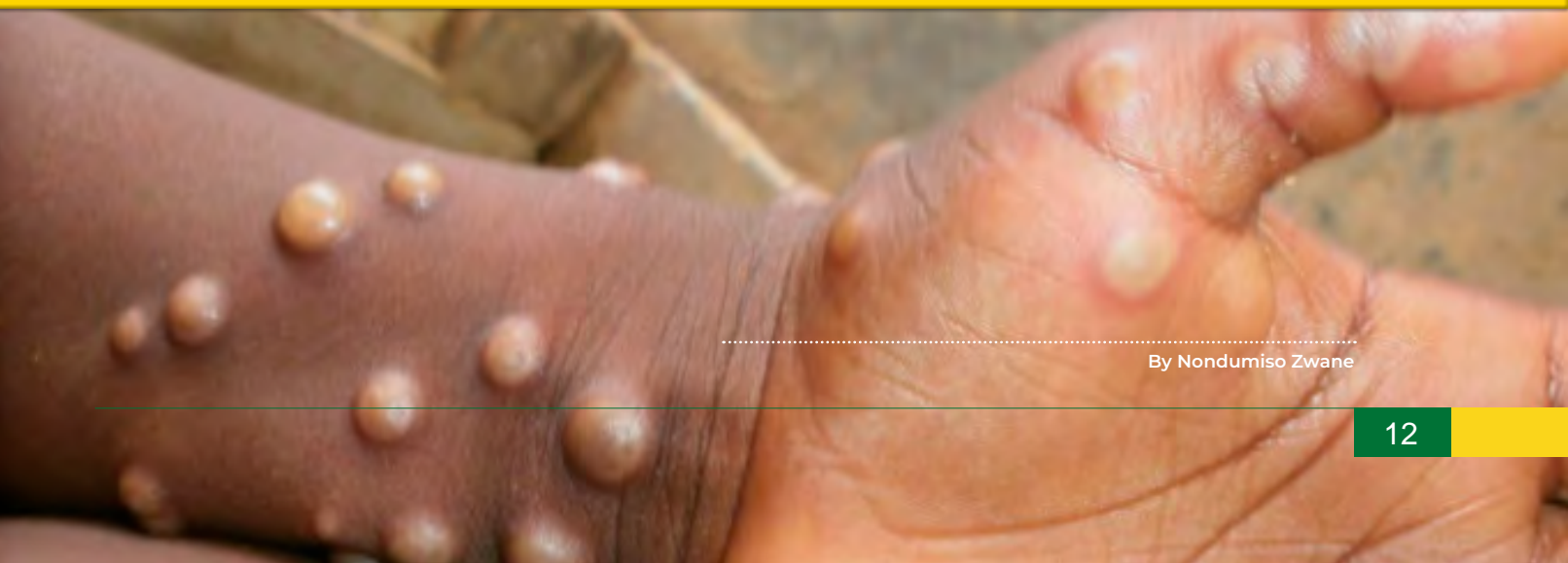
**Individuals with a suppressed or weak immune system, including:**

- Children,
- Pregnant women
- The elderly
- People with cancer and on chemotherapy treatment
- People living with HIV and either not on treatment or with a low CD4 count.

It is important to note that if anyone gets infected with Mpox, they should seek medical attention as soon as possible.

## How can a person lower their risk during sex?

- Vaccination
- Talk to your partner about any unexplained rash or lesion on either of your bodies including the mouth, genitals or anus.
- Do not engage in sexual activities if you see any unexplained rash. Visit your nearest health care centre immediately.
- If your partner has Mpox or you think you might have it, protect each other by avoiding sex of any kind and kissing or touching each other's bodies while you are sick.
- Do not share things like towels, fetish gear, sex toys and toothbrushes.



By Nondumiso Zwane

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE (NHI)



Since being enacted into law, the National Health Insurance Act has set tongues wagging, with many people asking questions. In this article, by Nondumiso Zwane, we answer all your pertinent questions on NHI.

## 1. How will NHI work, and how will it be funded?

NHI is a centralised, national insurance fund from which the government will buy healthcare services from healthcare providers in both public and private sectors. All eligible South African residents, as defined in the NHI Act, will be able to visit these providers whenever they need healthcare, without any payment. The NHI will make healthcare more affordable, by reducing the cost of healthcare due to the

economies of scale that can be achieved by purchasing healthcare for the entire population. Like home or car insurance, everyone will contribute to this fund routinely, whether they need healthcare or not, and then make a withdrawal from these pooled funds when they need healthcare. Contributions will be made through taxes and special contributions, in line with what each person can afford.

## 2. Will we be paying double now for medical aid as well as NHI?

The Fund will be implemented over phases and over many years. Regulations will be published to address the phased implementation of the NHI Fund and phased implementation of service benefits as the money is moved to the Fund. Medical schemes will be given notice on the type of services that they will no longer be able to cover. Once implemented, medical aid schemes won't be able to offer any health services already offered by the NHI.

- Medical schemes will only offer you extra services not covered by the NHI.
- The NHI will offer comprehensive health care service cover - there will be no co-payments.
- Medical Aid schemes will remain voluntary arrangement for those who choose to contribute to them, but they will only cover you for any additional benefits that the NHI Fund does not pay for, so they should be significantly cheaper. NHI will cover all South African citizens and qualifying non-South African citizens, who are legally in the country.

## 3. Should we cancel our Medical Aids? Does this mean that anyone can visit any hospital at any time for free?

- Medical Aid will be an individual choice, but NHI will be sufficient for basic essential healthcare service.
- The NHI Fund will pay the clinic, GP or hospital. You will not pay anything when receiving care.
- This is to make sure that everyone is able to receive health care services when they are sick, at a facility close to them (as long as the facility has a contract with the NHI Fund).
- NHI aims to make healthcare more accessible to all South Africans. Individuals will be able to access NHI-contracted GPs, clinics or hospitals closest to them, whether in the public or private sectors.
- An effective referral system will be in place to ensure access to appropriate services.
- The role of the Private Sector with NHI: Private General Practitioners will be a part of multi-disciplinary networks in their communities. Private hospitals will see patients referred by primary health care

providers in both public and private sectors and the NHI Fund will settle the bill at the prescribed rates.

## 4. Will the current infrastructure be able to handle the increase of patients?

There are initiatives underway to improve the conditions of public facilities. The Department of Health has allocated R7.2 billion over three years to facilitate maintenance, refurbishment, upgrades, of existing infrastructure and/or that which needs to be procured.

## 5. What kind of services will be excluded from NHI?

NHI fund will cover essential medical health services, which will be determined by the Benefits Advisory Committee. This committee will determine which benefits are medically necessary. These will include:

- Primary Health Care services: visits to clinics, community health centres and accredited multi-disciplinary group medical centres at a non-specialist level, community health care outreach workers, and integrated school health services.
- Hospital services: outpatient and in-patient visits at all accredited hospital levels, using a referral system (requiring a letter from a PHC centre or healthcare provider, unless in case of emergency)
- Rehabilitation health services
- Palliative Care
- Mental health services
- Emergency medical services
- Transportation for patients who are referred to and from another health facility. The non-essential services such as cosmetic surgery will not be covered under the fund.

## 6. When will the changes take effect?

As the NHI Bill has been signed into Law by the President, specific sections will be proclaimed into law on different dates. Implementation will not be a BIG BANG, all-encompassing once-off approach; but will be done in two phases.

- Phase one: 2023 to 2026
- Phase two: 2026 to 2029

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By Nondumiso Zwane

# UNDERSTANDING THE 'TWO-POT' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

**There has been a lot of excitement and some confusion about the “Two-Pot” system, which enables Government employees to access a portion of their pension fund savings. In this article, Impilo Chat helps you understand this system a little better.**

## **What is the 'two-pot' system of retirement?**

The two-pot retirement system is a new reform that will enable members of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) - as well as other pension funds - to make partial withdrawals from their retirement funds before retirement, while preserving a portion that can only be accessed at retirement to help improve retirement outcomes. This means members need not resign to access part of their retirement benefit if they are in financial distress. This reform will come into effect on 1 September 2024.

## **Who is it meant for?**

The new system will apply to all retirement funds, that is, both private sector and public sector funds, except for the old generation or legacy

retirement annuity policies, or funds with no active participating members (such as funds in liquidation, beneficiary funds, closed funds or dormant funds). Pensioners and members of provident funds who were 55 years and older on 1 March 2021 who have not opted to be part of the two-pot system will also be excluded.

## **Why the two-pot system?**

This system is meant to support long-term retirement savings while offering flexibility to help fund members in financial distress. In many cases, retirement funds are the only savings that fund members might have. Under the current system, some members resign prematurely, in order to access their retirement fund savings to pay off debt. But this may be detrimental from an economic, financial planning and retirement provision point of view. The two-pot system is meant to help fund members in times of financial difficulty by allowing access to the savings component before retirement. It is advisable that members use the savings component sparingly and only when there is a dire need. Importantly, the two-pot system also protects a portion of savings to only be used for retirement.

### How will it work?

The reform creates a “savings component”, a “retirement component” and a “vested component”. Only the “savings component” and “retirement component” can receive retirement contributions from the date of implementation of the “two-pot” system onwards. The vested component will house retirement benefits accumulated by the member before the implementation date.

Investment growth will still be credited to this component. From 1 September 2024, retirement contributions will be split by your retirement fund into a savings component (or pot) and a retirement component. A ratio of 1/3 (one-third) of total contributions will go into the savings component and 2/3 (two-third) of total contributions into the retirement component.

For example, if person A’s retirement contribution in September 2024 is R900 per month, R300 will go to the savings component and R600 into the retirement component. Person A would be able to withdraw any amount from the savings component, but the withdrawal should not be less

R2 000 and a withdrawal can only be made once in a tax year. One does not need to make a withdrawal from the savings component every tax year. Amounts in the account will still be available for withdrawal in future years and would benefit from tax-free growth within the account until a withdrawal is made.

The savings component will be accessible at any time, but withdrawals must be a minimum of R2 000, but only one withdrawal may be made in a tax year. What is withdrawn will be taxed at the individual’s marginal tax rate. The retirement component cannot be accessed on resignation and may only be accessed at retirement. That means it will be preserved until retirement. Retrenchment cases will be dealt with in another phase of this reform process. The retirement value accumulated as at 31st August 2024, referred to as the “vested component”, will not take further contributions but will remain invested by the retirement fund. Should you resign in future, your current right (vested right) to access this component or have it transferred to a preservation fund is maintained.



Source: [www.treasury.gov.za](http://www.treasury.gov.za)

# WELCOMING OUR NEW INTERNS

**As mandated by Government, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health runs a public service graduate work experience programme, which targets unemployed graduates.**

This 24 months' internship seeks to empower young people with the necessary job training and work experience in various fields, such as Web and Library Services, Media and Communications, Information Technology, Human Resource, Labor Relations, to name but a few.



## **Sibusisiwe Ncwane, Intern:**

Web and Library Services:


"I started my internship in May and it has been a wonderful couple of months. I have been exposed to a lot of things, such as training for the library system, book acquisitions, ordering of books, invoices, and managing the intranet. I am currently working on the online library. We are trying to develop it and make certain adjustments. So far I am adjusting to the working environment and enjoying every moment of it. I am learning a lot. Hopefully, when the internship ends, I would have gained new skills for future employment."



## **Mbongiseni Ngcobo, Intern:**

Human Resource Development.

I am working as an administrator, and have learnt a lot from administration. We have done orientation on three districts, where I assisted with collection and capturing of information on new recruits. I have enjoyed working with everyone in the office. They have been very helpful with all the activities that I need to do. And when I need assistance with anything, I can call them and they are always there to help. They have made the working environment good for us, it is not toxic. Being here so far has been very beneficial and I am going to use all I am learning here for the future. I would also give back to this place, so that I'll leave it better than I've found it."



*Internship seeks to empower young people with the necessary job training and work experience in various fields*



**Robin Madlala, Intern:**  
Labour Relations.

"We have working so well with everyone. They have been really nice to us. We have been to meetings, and recording minutes accordingly. We've been sitting down for grievances, appeals and preparing submissions. We also go to different institutions to be part of certain cases, like disputes, complaints, and other labour-related issues. The work environment is good, our seniors are helpful, and are teaching us with patience. They are teaching us all that we need to know and do, and they are always welcoming. On our first day, they prepared food for us, which was really nice of them."



**Lindokuhle Gumede, Intern:**  
Corporate Communications (Media and Videography):

I am working well with everyone, and it has been a wonderful experience. I am being exposed to a lot, and I am hoping by the end of the internship, I would have gathered as much as possible for my future. Everyone has been so welcoming and helpful. The work environment has been good. Since I arrived I have gained advanced editing skills, shooting videos, making social media clips and setting up the studio setting. I got to post videos that I shot and edited on YouTube for the public to view them. I am also assisting in other fields like Journalism, marketing and branding, where we make displays and put up posters in the building for awareness.

By Nondumiso Zwane, Sicelile Mngadi & Misithemba Mhlongo

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